The Ministry of the Beautiful.

THE MINISTRY

OF

THE BEAUTIFUL.

BY

HENRY JAMES SLACK, F.G.S.,

OF THE MIDDLE TEMPLE.

Thus was Beauty sent from Heaven,
The lovely ministress of truth and good
In this dark world.

AKENSIDE.

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TO THE

REV. HENRY CHRISTMAS, M.A., F.R.S., F.S.A.,

LIBRARIAN AND SECRETARY OF SION COLLEGE,

ETC., ETC.

IN GREATER AFFECTION FOR

HIS FIRM AND GENEROUS QUALITIES AS A FRIEND,

THAN ADMIRATION FOR

HIS SPLENDID TALENTS AND EXTENSIVE LEARNING,

THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE

Dedicated

BY HIS COUSIN,

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

However great may be the store of facts which human observation and experience have collected, the leading ideas extracted from them are both simple and few. These are, for the most part, very incompletely understood if presented only to the reasoning faculties, and the little that can be comprehended in this manner often exerts a mischievous effect by suggesting or encouraging very erroneous notions of man's nature and destiny. Whatever may have been the case in past ages the

superstitions of present or recent time present few qualities of a redeeming character; while a gross utilitarian materialism characterizes too many insurgent minds. There are evidences in the existing state of society of an earnest and increasing desire to correct these defects, and to avoid falling into the error of building faith upon the fallacy of authority, or of supposing that a man has fulfilled the duties of self-education when he has managed to believe very little, and taken care that little should be of an apparently reasonable description.

The following pages are an attempt to present some of the truths which form the basis of our philosophy, in their character of verities of the imagination and the heart as well as of the intellect. The contro-

versial element has been carefully avoided, not that the author supposes many things that he has advanced to be incapable of dispute, but because such a process would be evidently unsuited to the design of the book.

Every faculty of the human mind has its own laws of belief, and truth can be presented to our sympathies as well as to our reason, and when viewed under such an aspect it is *felt* rather than *known*, and is not in a proper state for discussion. When truths are thus objects of feeling, their beauty becomes apparent, and the "Ministry of the Beautiful," as endeavoured to be set forth in the following pages, consists chiefly in its omnipresent power of stimulating the fancy and the heart

to join the intellect in adoration of the good and true.

As external objects exert a principal action in exciting our faculties, natural scenery has been made to form the ground-work of the reflections that are presented to the reader. In these the Author has performed no process of manufacture, but has freely told out the thoughts and feelings that have been suggested to his own mind by the scenes described. The conversational form was chosen partly for the sake of exhibiting some of the modifications of impression produced by difference of sex, and partly because it seemed adapted to that discursiveness of thought, that was essential to the writer's plan.

The subjects treated of range over some

extent, comprising matters with which every thinker and moderate reader will be more or less familiar,—they relate to physical and metaphysical science, and, to some extent, to theology.

The Author makes no claim to novelty or originality in the leading ideas brought forward; he believes they will be found in the best writers of all ages, and if the same thought occur in more than one of the Conversations, he hopes the connexion will give sufficient variety to prevent the tedium of repetition.

The idea of the book was suggested many years ago, by reading Sir Humphrey Davy's Last Days of a Philosopher; and the Author is glad to confess large obligations to the writings of Sir Thomas Brown. The Songs

which are interspersed have been set to very beautiful music, by Mr. William Thorold Wood, the composer of the "People's Anthem," and it is to be hoped that he will shortly publish them. With these remarks, and the hope that while nothing in the following pages can do any one any harm, there may be found something fitted to help earnest inquiring minds in their search after truth, the book is commended to such readers as it may find.

23, Stockwell Park Road, Brixton.
June, 1850.

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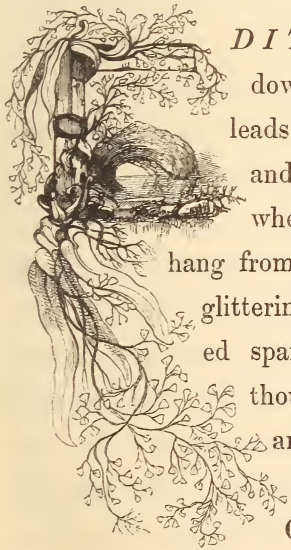
CONVERSATION I.

THE

MINISTRY OF THE BEAUTIFUL.

CONVERSATION I.

EDITH, LYULPH.



EDITH. Let us go down the ravine, which leads to the sea-shore, and sit in the cavern where the graceful ferns hang from the roof, the walls glittering with many-coloured spar, and rich with a thousand tints of moss and lichen. It seems a bower built by the Genii of flowers and stones for ocean spirits. It is a sacred place

where revelations must come to those who stand and wait with a pure heart and patient spirit.

Lyulph. Better choice could not be made. I love caverns of all kinds, from those gloomy recesses which seem the fitting abodes of beings to whom dark and fearful powers belong, to those exquisite forms where the awful, the beautiful, and the joyous are so mysteriously blended as in that which thou hast chosen. Justly hast thou said it is a place for the soul to receive revelation. The Universal Spirit makes its presence strongly felt in caverns, and unfolds new views of religion and philosophy to prepared minds.

E. How like a fitting prelude to a wondrous strain of harmony does this glen lead to the wild and cavernous shore! It is as an approach to a temple. See how the sloping sun purples the craggy tops of its steep sides, how bright is the heaven above,

and what comparative darkness in the deep gorge we tread!

L. There is indeed light above; but see how amid the gloom the little torrent, with all its haste, reflects the radiance of the sky.

E. So in an evil world do good souls, even in the busiest turmoil, catch some light from above and make heaven visible by reflection in the dark places of earth.

L. The worlds of matter and of spirit are full of such analogies. Indeed matter is only Divine thought, visible and tangible to human sense.

E. Is it not then real? Is earth and all that it contains but a vision—a dream?

L. A Divine dream is more real than a human work. With ourselves to think is to be. The thoughts of God are the facts of the universe!

E. Hence comes the nobility of science, which is an interpretation of the Divine.

L. It is; and they see but a little way into the mysteries of Nature, to whom the work is not that of the prophet and the priest.

E. Why prophetic?

L. Did you not say the cavern to which we are going was a place of revelation? To receive such is the function of the prophet.

E. See how a sudden turn of the path has placed the great ocean before us.

L. Infinity is before us, manifested by its grandest type.

E. How suddenly it comes upon us. We were near it, but it was neither felt nor seen. As we tread the path of life, with equal suddenness comes the view of that primeval ocean eternity, established an infinity before one drop of this world's water was created, and destined to exist for an infinity after all traces of its existence have passed away.

L. To man only does anything pass away. To the creating mind and to such as can approach sufficiently near it, is one eternal present. Outward forms addressed to our organs pass away, and we pass away, but the idea, the reality remains.

E. It seems as though in mortal life, we behold only images and reflections. It remains for immortality to exhibit realities, as they are.

L. The wisest of us, which is the holiest, see somewhat by the eyes of faith.

E. I cling to the mortal, and yet long for immortality.

L. Say rather, you are immortal, and long for the extension of faculties which are infinite.

E. Eternity has an intense, absorbing attraction, but not all the joys of heaven could stifle the regret which would belong to leaving and losing one flower of earth.

L. None will be lost, they have passed

away, and will pass away from human, mortal vision; as the elements which built them up assume other forms.

Two existences are blended, the physical and the transient, the metaphysical and eternal; the first alone is mortal. To immortal eyes, earth's earliest flowers yet bloom, and the first beam of new-created stars yet shines in the eternal heavens, and will shine long after the physical have ceased to exist.

E. These things are paradoxical, but I feel them true: that which seems to contradict reason, is constantly most plain to faith.

L. You said rightly *seems* to contradict reason, nothing unreasonable can be true; but man often imagines *that* opposed to reason which is above it. The sceptic denies the realities of faith, as the blind might deny the beauty of colour, or the deaf the harmony of sound.

E. We have almost reached the shore. See down what rugged rocks the stream precipitates itself to join the ocean.

L. Its race is run, and now with a triumphant exulting death, it passes to an infinite home.

E. Death! I see only fresh-bursting joyous life.

L. When good men die, spirits as much above them as you are above this stream, behold no death but new-born and immortal life.

E. I should like to begin the immortal now, before death.

L. You have done so, you are a dweller in eternity, and have immortality within.

E. How?

L. From earliest childhood, rather should I say infancy, you had—all have more or less—glimpses of the eternal. You have had thoughts, feelings, and aspirations, twining themselves about the everlasting,

too good to die. With the first of such you entered the precincts of the immortal, and the more they increased, the further you advanced into that ever-abiding land.

E. I feel that is indeed true. I am, we all are, at once mortal and immortal, inhabitants of time, and dwellers in eternity.

L. Man has two lives, one grovelling, and one aspiring: two homes, a squalid hovel, and a gorgeous palace.

E. Would that he always aspired, and dwelt in the nobler one!

L. To do so always, will be the immortal lot of those who reach the perfection of their being. Meanwhile there is the choice how most of their time is passed. Mortal progress, and, for ought we know, part of immortal progress also, is accompanied by occasional retrogression, just as when the ocean-tide flows towards the shore, many waves fall behind their pre-

decessors, but the majority advance, and the appointed goal is reached.

E. But when man's nature is fully and properly developed, his progress will be ceaseless, steady, and brilliant, like the planets in their courses "on, on, for ever."

L. True, because perfection is continuous advance.

E. Now we are in the cavern, what does it say to us?

L. Let us stand and wait.

(*After a pause.*)

E. Hear how the wind wafts the sound of the waves into the cavern, whose echoes seem to hold converse with the ocean; see how the rocks glisten with rainbow colours as they catch the beams of the descending sun, and how the soft shadow of the graceful ferns wave gently, as the breeze stirs the leaves, and the drops that fall from the roof glisten like coloured gems, and make melody when they strike the deep

green pool below, which, with the varied hues and exquisite forms of coralline and sea-weed, seems an Eden garden for the creatures that dwell therein. Is it not as if all the elements were taking sweet counsel together?

(*Edith sings:*)—

I.

Oh! many-voiced sea,
I pray thee tell me,
What thou art saying
To the clouds and the caves,
With thy rippling waves?

II.

Oh! sunlight and sky,
Gentle breeze passing by,
What are you saying
To cave, drop, and fern,
Which speak in return?

III.

Oh! mosses and maidenhair,
Seaweed and crystal clear,
What are you saying
To the sun, and the sea,
I pray you, tell me?

L. They are all true apostles, saying all things to all men who listen in faith. They speak a truly universal language which the wise, with more or less distinctness, have understood in all ages, and in part translated into the language of men.

E. Hence so much of poetry and philosophy in the world.

L. It is in vain for man to isolate himself in his chamber, and endeavour to excogitate truth. It is not to be thus attained. Let him go to Nature, the great revealer, patiently wait her teaching, and then tell out with what distinctness he can, the lesson he has learnt.

E. Art is only a hieroglyphic, or sacred language, in which noble thoughts should be expressed.

L. So does the artist aspire towards the Creator. The manifestations of art are like the productions of Nature; for it has

been wisely said, Nature is the Art of God.

E. With what divine art is this glorious cavern constructed!

L. It is, indeed, an abode of beauty in many forms; how richly the roof is fretted with curious work; how varied the hues of spar and moss which make the walls glow so brightly in the golden light.

E. Is it not like a monument of ancient art? Does it not tell of the times of old?

L. It is a memorial of distant ages; possibly within the human era, the winds and the waves may have hollowed it out, but its foundations were laid when strange and uncouth creatures inhabited our globe. For aught we know it may have been their dwelling-place.

E. How strange to think of a world so full of beauty, and no being living upon it to appreciate its loveliness.

L. Nature is prodigal of beauty, it is

and has been from the beginning an omnipresent thing; it was on the earth in a thousand forms before man was there, and is now on the earth in places where his footstep never trod.

E. If unseen of man, it may be gazed upon with admiration by other beings perhaps more exalted than he.

L. It may. We know not with whom we share the globe. But if no created eye beholds the flowers which unfold their petals in distant and unknown lands, or if none observed the loveliness of a preadamite world, nothing has been lost, the basis of their beauty was a divine idea, and thought is triumphant over decay and time.

E. It seems to me as though caverns told stories of the past, while the ocean speaks of the eternity which is to come.

L. Such is also the impression on my own mind; the ocean is ever active, to some

the emblem of inconstancy, but more truly to others of stability, the same from age to age, while the solid earth has been melted, crushed, shivered to atoms, changed again and again. The ocean is a true type of Nature's permanence, which is ceaseless, but defined change.

E. Is there no rest?

L. Harmonious motion is divine repose.

E. The cavern leads us to the past, and the ocean to the future. How readily do we obey the voice of either and forsake the present.

L. Rather out of the past and future do we make a present. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof, but not the good. To magnify our *now* we ransack a double eternity.

E. And wisely; for without it how grievous would be the burdens of time, and how beggarly its joys!

L. In divine being the past and the future

are with the present, and man as he advances is able to take possession of a double inheritance. The strong mingling of the past and the future with the present raises human life above brute existence.

E. It is the source of deep suffering and gorgeous hope.

L. It seems a constant plan of Nature's to build exquisite structures with worthless and often loathsome materials; the brilliant plant and the phosphorescent light spring from rottenness; and among the decay of expectations and the mangled relics of happiness, hope blossoms and shines at once a flower and a star.

E. What changes the rocks composing this cavern have witnessed and survived!

L. The materials composing them accumulating for ages in the bed of some primeval sea, raised to the surface by movements of elevation, contorted and bent by volcanic convulsions, cracked in various directions,

the fissures filled with melted matter, which, consolidating, took the more or less perfect crystalline form we now behold. Here is a tale of ages of change and convulsion; but evidence is not wanting of permanence and abiding law. The elements composing these stones combine now in precisely the same proportions as they combined in the beginning, and when any assume a crystalline structure, they build up precisely the same forms now, as when matter first obeyed the attracting influences upon which they depend. Destruction, renovation, change under defined law were means employed of old, and still lead onwards to the development of one great plan, which at once is, has been, and is to be.

E. Everywhere is the infinite—we are in it and it in us. Happy are they who catch some glimpses of what they are, and whither they are going.

CONVERSATION II.

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SCENE.—*A Sea-shore, with sands, rocks, and lofty headlands.*

Lyulph. It is a pleasant feeling to be the first to walk on sands which the tide has just left. It is like being the first to visit a new land. It produces a freshness of sensation something akin to that of early morning, or of spring. It is like entering upon a new stage of life, having a new world before us from which to receive, and upon which to make impressions.

Edith. Footsteps on the sand?

L. Man's impress on the earth.

E. I hope that is more enduring.

L. Where is Babylon or Thebes?

E. They exist in history and song; but the tracks we now make will be wholly obliterated by the coming tide.

L. Probably they may, but similar traces have endured for ages, and apparently the most transient memorials have survived towers and temples, polities and religions.

E. What mean you?

L. I speak of the fossil footsteps found in sandstones, which are among the most startling of the globe's antiquities.

E. I know not why footsteps should make so deep an impression on the imagination; but those you speak of must exercise a strange fascination. I do not think that any fragments of the creatures themselves would produce so strong an effect.

L. Fossil bones tell of existence only, footsteps speak of action.

E. The mind is at once startled and delighted,—we seem to be brought into in-

timate contact with those early beings; wonder is most strongly excited at the magical permanence given to that which seems in its nature so transient, and the mysterious manner in which we are thus carried into the presence of the past.

L. There is, indeed, mystery in Nature's working. How often are stupendous results achieved by apparently inadequate causes, the strong confounded by the weak, the wise by the simple; and here is a monument of the frailest kind formed ages before the creation of man, mocking all his efforts to establish lasting memorials in the most durable materials.

E. It is a miracle how they have survived.

L. The Universe is one great miracle, and with slow steps do we comprehend some of the infinite variety of effects which a few simple laws are competent to produce. Wonderful as the preservation of these foot-

steps may appear, it is easily understood, "nothing more is required than that they should be rapidly covered up with a thin coating of marl and fresh sands superimposed. In after ages, when the soft sands have become sand-stones, and are elevated above their former level, the stones split wherever a layer of a different material occurs,"* and thus man may tread on the very steps of an earlier world.

E. It is something like men thrown on a desert island, finding traces of former inhabitants. A footstep under such circumstances must be at once comforting and sad.

L. If there is satisfaction in belonging to an ancient race, and dwelling in habitations which have sheltered our ancestors for many generations, is there not also a deep feeling of pleasure in knowing that our globe is no novelty in creation, but has been for

* Ansted's Geology.

myriads of ages the abode of creatures analogous to those at present inhabiting it, holding and enjoying life upon the same conditions?

E. I think I have heard of ripple marks being preserved as well as footsteps.

L. They have, and make us almost hear the murmur of those early waves.

E. How suggestive are certain forms, of sounds! Even in this calm we can scarcely look at those rocks and headlands without thinking of the thunder of the waves upon them in a storm.

L. How grandly pre-eminent above all other sounds are those of ocean!

E. They seem to fill the soul with the noblest of all music, that in which multitudinous melody makes the richest harmony.

L. The nearest approach to it is the sound of forest leaves, when stirred by the evening breeze.

E. But how different is the effect of

stormy gales; the forest creaks and groans as though fearful of the blast, while the ocean seems to exult in the exercise of surpassing power.

L. I know nothing more exciting than a storm at sea; how resistless an appeal to the energies of the brave. If matter which is dead, inanimate, can do so much, what shall man do with mind, with a soul!—When the elements rage, man should soar above them and aspire to be their ruler.

E. And yet after the most heroic resistance, how often he must perish!

L. The elements which are physical, claim that portion of him which belongs to them, and at last with resistless power; but the soul, created before they had their being, will survive their fall.

E. Mean you to state the pre-existence of man?

L. Physical science teaches that in the beginning each globe was weighed, and that

through all changes not a particle has been added or taken away throughout the stellar universe. All soul existed from the beginning in the Divine soul; all individuality which is, has been, or will be, had its pre-existence, has its present existence in creative being.

E. If we tarry a little while, we shall behold a sunset on the ocean,—a sight worth traversing a kingdom to see.

L. There could not be a finer place for it than this wide bay, bounded on either hand by rugged rocks and beetling cliffs.

E. How finely the sands glow in the amber light, what a beautiful purple gleams on the crests of the tiny waves!

L. The mixture of purple, gold, white, and grey, is most magical and unexpected.

E. The colours have changed as if by the moving of a fairy wand.

L. The thin mists and clouds are traversed by the solar rays at diminishing

angles, and their passage through varying thicknesses of vapour in different states produces the variety. Were it not for water in the world, light could not display one tithe of its beauty. The remotest star whose beams reach our globe would shine with a very diminished splendour did a perfectly dry atmosphere surround a parched world.

E. One universal tint of clear deep blue, is very beautiful for a time; but I should not like to dwell in a cloudless land. I hope clouds will not be banished from any "Islands of the blest," to which my soul may roam.

L. Nor do I desire a perpetual day. Even were I capable of unceasing action, did my frame need no repose, I should still long for morning, noon, and night, with the alternation of sensation and emotion, to which they give rise.

E. It is delightful to think that even a

light stream of vapour on earth's surface, should strengthen the connection between distant worlds. On a clear night, when the heavens are full of transparent moisture, with what moving living brilliance the stars and planets shine! It seems as though their spirits were descending to hold converse with men.

L. Such nights in a wide wild country, almost restore the astrologer's antique faith. The science of our own day has disproved much, and the sceptical spirit has denied more; but times are not wanting, when, to imaginative minds, the stars assert their influence on the affairs of men. All existence is bound together by chains of mutual subservience. Independence, which would be isolation in a creature, does not exist.

E. How much of the thoughts of the present day, of its religion and philosophy, is derived from the starlight, which fell ages ago upon the plains of Palestine!

L. Concerning those orbs, what revolutions have taken place in human opinion! they have been deities, subordinate rulers of destiny,—mere candles of night,—their spiritual influence exaggerated, denied; but they have gone on quietly shining in their eternal spheres contributing in grateful and thankless times to man's happiness and advancement.

E. See, the sun's orb now touches the distant wave; it seems a bridal between light and ocean—a happy union of fire and its great antagonist. It is no quenching of its splendour; but a retirement into a bridal chamber, whose closing portals shut out vulgar gaze, while the rich after-tints are like an ample largesse bestowed upon an admiring crowd.

L. Now Twilight steps across the wave, spreading her thin grey veil over all the scene. This is a witching time by the sea. Sharp outlines are melted into air, a living

moving character is given to inanimate objects.

E. It is a thrilling time, not unmixed with terror. Look at yon headland: does it not seem like a huge monster, with gigantic head resting on folded paws, a creature fit to start into fearful action in the fabled twilight of the gods?

L. It will not await that period to sate its ravenous maw; many a gallant ship and crew will be swallowed there. These times, with their strange combination of colour, light, and shade, establish a connection between the living and the inorganic worlds; we scarce know where life ends and mere physical powers alone have sway.

E. They are hours which make one feel the omnipresency of spirit. We cannot wonder at superstition, which is faith wandering in a twilight, when the torch of reason has not been kindled for its guidance.

L. Man is now living in a physical scep-

tical state, removed from that contact with Nature which is essential to fervid faith. It has been among deserts, by the ocean, on mountain tops, in caverns or wide-stretched plains, remote from his fellow-man, that poets, philosophers, and statesmen, have obtained that faith by which they triumphed in the end, even though martyrdom was their road. The action now going on is, to a great extent, destructive ; old belief is being rooted from the earth, doubtless to prepare it for an ampler and nobler harvest, the seeds of which are even now being sown.

E. Man resides awhile in the house of unbelief, in order that the mansions of faith may be furnished anew.

L. We must hope the ceaseless grinding of commercial elements to which he is now exposed, will one day evolve a brighter destiny, when he will have leisure to place himself in confiding contact with the abiding realities of Nature. Earthquakes and vol-

canic storms, precede periods of flourishing peace, turmoil is a prelude to repose, destructive agitation leads to lasting calm.

E. So in Brahminical fable, good and evil spirits strangely joined together to churn the ocean, in order to procure the immortal Amreeta drink.

L. Good and evil, light and darkness, are agents employed by One Power for one end; man's liberty, great and true as it is, is contained in Nature's necessity, and all elements, contrarious though they seem, harmoniously combine for the realization of ultimate good.

E. The twilight tints have left the sky, and night commences her watch over the world, high in the heavens is her taper lit, around which will soon glow a thousand kindred flames.

L. I love to see one star alone in the sky, casting its track of light upon the water: does it not seem a path across the ocean for good spirits to traverse?

E. Yes, and a chain connecting heaven and earth. How strongly light and life are associated together, how closely do our feelings interweave themselves with the stars which seem part of the furniture of a beloved home!

L. Those who have journeyed to another hemisphere, leaving home, country, and friends, have well described their sensations at finding even the stars were changed.

E. It must be like losing the last memorials of their native land; but even if there should be cause for sorrow and gloom, if, as often happens, they were driven from the old world by misfortune and disappointment, and the loss of all familiar objects should give an impression of desolation, there would be consolation and hope; for the cross, the emblem of suffering and triumph, would beam upon them from the heavens in splendour and in peace.

CONVERSATION III.

CONVERSATION III.

Edith. Let us go to the oak wood, in the gorge among the hills, and sit by the waterfall.

Lyulph. Willingly, for it is a delightful place to pass a summer noon.

E. They call this a barren land, and yet how full of beautiful vegetation is every spot on which the eye can rest! Each stone has its mossy carpet, and wild flowers spring from every cranny among the rocks.

L. Man's notion of barrenness is commercial; the most exquisite productions in the richest abundance do not redeem a country from the charge, if it does not minister

to his physical wants. I often thank God that there are wildernesses left, wild spots where profit has no dominion. I have little sympathy with an everlasting food factory.

E. Yet you would not proscribe cultivation, nor deny the beauty of rich harvests with their golden and green colour, and promise both of employment and subsistence?

L. On the contrary, I wish agriculture to advance, and am deeply touched with the artistic as well as economic beauty of waving crops, with sunburnt reapers and thrifty gleaners, but still love to see some portion of the world let alone, where untamed nature can put forth those simple forms which yield such luxuriant harvests of suggestive thought. I love all waste and desolate places, where the everlasting idea of property does not intrude, and no human inventions seem to stand between man and Nature.

E. Over-cultivation is destructive to the sublime.

L. Unless all its niceties are obscured, massed together by shadow and distance, as when a wide-stretched scene is viewed from a lofty hill; but even that is a poor substitute for moor and mountain.

E. I can well understand the enthusiasm of mountain tribes for their native home.

L. How slow and heavy become the faculties of those whose life is passed in a region entirely devoted to cultivation. There is so little stimulus to exertion, to aspiration.

E. Mountains, moors, and cities have developed the strongest patriotism, the intensest energy.

L. Similar results produced by contrasted means. Solitude, desolation and thronging crowds, exercising analogous power over the mind.

E. And yet mountain tribes have seldom preserved in civilization the energy they showed in a savage state.

L. Trade, commerce, manufactures, the agencies for developing civilization, belong rather to plains than to mountains; but when civilized man adventures into the wild haunts of savage life, with what courage and determination he is filled.

E. Did he not take those with him?

L. He took capacities for them, but how much activities depend on place! Freedom, indomitable perseverance to overcome obstacles, are most strongly felt in wild regions. Mountains, heaths, forests and rocky shores are the localities for impulsive life.

E. But knowledge comes with cities.

L. Such is their mission for good, but they have strong tendencies to mischief, and sordid calculating conventionality destroys fine emotions.

E. The world is wide enough for cities and wildernesses also, and we must hope that the progress of locomotion and other

appliances will bring both influences to bear upon, and jointly contribute to the regeneration of mankind.

L. I believe they will. The beginning of wisdom was among the wilds of Asia, and it is most wonderful to think what grand ideas entered the minds of the shepherds of those antique plains. It was the inspiration of Nature, to which we must return after all our inventions.

E. But the sojourn in a working, striving world will have had its utility. Cultivated man will learn more from Nature than the rude savage.

L. When the cultivation has not been perversion. Regeneration is the grand thing. Man as an individual, as a race, must cast aside his prejudices and supposed philosophy, become again a child, and learn to wonder and adore.

E. The simplicity of the second childhood is higher than that of the first.

L. The first is vacuity, freedom from positive evil, the second is wisdom, strong yearning towards that which is good.

E. How delightful it is to give way completely to natural influences, to present as it were one absorbing assimilating surface, and like some of the lowest tribes of animals take in nutriment at every pore.

L. To learn to be passively recipient is a wonderful lesson.

E. We must now follow the winding of the stream, and shall soon enter the oak wood. What a little joyous energy it seems, leaping and flashing from rock to stone. I love these little torrents; they bear the same relation to grave majestic rivers that playful childhood does to maturer age.

L. What a contrast it is to the deep repose which at this season the noontide brings to other objects! Day and night its bustling active race goes on, flowers grow on its banks, and often fling their leaves

across its course in such profusion as to conceal it from the view; but, seen or unseen, it pursues its work insensibly yet surely, deepening its channel in the rock. The valley in which we walk is a monument of its labour, which took countless centuries to accomplish. Wonderful is the work performed by small streams, the capillary veins and arteries of the earth. Everywhere small causes are producing stupendous results; whole continents built up by small coral polypes, and large valleys excavated by tiny rivulets. Perseverance and time triumph over the most gigantic obstacles.

E. Now we enter the ancient wood. In what wild forms the gnarled and mossy boughs are twisted, what a sensation of sacred repose. We cannot wonder at the Druid's passion for the oak, and the reverence paid to consecrated groves.

L. The hill and the grove have exercised a strong influence on the religion and philo-

sophy of all ages. Even when altogether secularized in the public mind, the antique rites abolished and proscribed, the new and triumphant faith has exhibited traces of the effect of both.

E. Let us sit on this mossy stone, o'ercanopied with thick branching trees and catching the refreshing breeze which springs from the waterfall.

L. It offers a resistless invitation to repose.

E. What a delicious combination of sounds,—the quiet hum of insect life, the gentle rustling of leaves through which the sunshine strays with interrupted light, and the rushing of the waterfall!

L. How beautiful it is to look up through green branches and catch glimpses of the deep blue sky, through which at intervals float fleecy clouds of dazzling whiteness!

E. How different is the repose of summer noon from that of night!

L. In both active energies are suspended, but in the former sensuous impressions are luxuriously received. The muscular system experiences a pleasing languor, and the recipient faculties are in a state of delicious action.

E. Physical organism is the source of exquisite sensations.

L. Men do not half value sensuous life. The sensualist brutifies and dulls the delicate organization on which it depends; the worldly man knows not its enjoyments, which are best felt by the purest and the wisest.

E. You speak of a condition in which every nerve thrills in delicious sympathy with external nature.

L. It is a state in which all corporeal grossness seems lost, and every limb glows with the ecstasy of seraphic being.

E. It seems an apotheosis of mortal passion.

L. And, like other exalted conditions, a foretaste of immortality.

E. If we listen to the sound of falling water what a strange thrilling trickling sensation runs through the nerves.

L. It is like an electrical aura, or the cool sensation seemingly radiated downwards from clear cloudless skies on summer nights, but much stronger than either.

E. Is it not also like swinging rapidly through the air, but more languishing?

L. Such recurring sensations promote sleep and happy dreams.

E. It is pleasant, as it were, to untwist the chains of this harmony, and follow the separate sounds as they grow more distant and indistinct. At first we hear the subdued roar of the waterfall as a fundamental note, but patient listening detects its harmonic relations; the mass of sound flowing and receding as the breeze stirs.

L. In such positions we think rather in sounds and colours than in words, for

language is not the only framework of thought.

E. Is not the smell of forests delicious? it seems to ascend like the smoke of incense.

L. A natural offering, spontaneous, requiring no priesthood to kindle or wave its censers.

E. I am sure such odours have command of an extended range of metaphysical emotion. They are full of suggestion. The burning of aromatic woods and gums is the only form of sacrifice one seems to regret. Clouds of incense floating through the aisles of a cathedral and mingling with the waves of sacred sound, certainly contribute to the elevation of the mind.

L. Natural religion is addressed to all faculties and powers; hence it is partly sensuous, while artificial religion is purely dogmatic. We must hope for the time when the opinions of the wise, the feelings and

aspirations of the good, and the sensuous expressions of the artist will all unite in the ritual service of a nation's faith.

E. I hope it will not be long before we see a revival of art.

L. I hope not; but many changes must first take place. Man must indulge in thoughts, feelings, and aspirations, which demand high art for their expression; he must dwell more in emotional life, and less in external things.

E. There are certainly symptoms of progress.

L. There are, and important ones. Art is increasingly more requisite for decorative furniture and household implements. This will engender a familiarity with the beautiful to a sufficient extent to stimulate a higher appreciation.

E. Art is far too much considered as property. Genius belongs to no country, but to the world; and its productions should not

have their influence bounded by selfish possessiveness.

L. No kind of possession entails more responsibility.

E. Were the moral influences of a perception of the beautiful rightly perceived, what efforts would be made for its advancement!

L. There would. Many of them coarse and physical enough: societies for its propagation at home and in foreign parts, resolutions and edicts.

E. It is true that we trust far too much to mere mechanical, organic powers, instead of relying on mind and heart.

L. The difficulties before us are many and great, but doubt not they will be overcome. Let each one go to Nature as often as possible; casting aside for a little while, at least, his worldly cares, let him go in confidence and faith, and he will not seek in vain. The vista of the future exhibits dan-

gers and difficulties, but at last triumph and peace.

E. Just as we now behold in this wood deep shadows and tangled thickets, but can look beyond them and discern a spot, where the unclouded and unintercepted sun sheds its full radiance on the fragrant soil.

CONVERSATION IV.

CONVERSATION IV.

Lyulph. How times and seasons are in concert! Spring is suggestive of morning, summer of noon, autumn of evening, and winter of night.

Edith. I like each best in turn. A little while ago I had a hearty welcome for Old Winter, when he came holding his icy fingers over the world, impressing all vegetation with mesmeric sleep; and now my own soul seems budding and bursting into new life with every opening flower. It seems to wake with the busy bustling breeze, now here, now there, with the clear warm sunlight, and the changing clouds.

L. You are almost an elemental spirit.

E. I love them all.

L. And in loving all, you are all.

E. Is it not in the words of an old poet, "the bridal of earth and sky?"

L. It is more, for it is a triple union in which the Ocean joins. With what responsive lustre his broad face gleams, purple, green, and blue, dark lines of shade, regions of mist and brilliant light! Sometimes the air makes the near things distant or invisible, and brings close remote objects.

E. Even now, parts of the distant coast are so brightly lit, that buildings can be discerned, while the capricious clouds make the rest invisible. And then across the unbounded ocean, through what bands of sunshine, shadow, and varied colour the eye can reach. The craggy cliffs gleam with golden furze and bright green, in which thousands of wild flowers are hastening to unfold their leaves, the rocky pools in sympathetic

impulse glow with purple, green, and brown, as the ocean plants obey the call of spring.

(*Edith sings.*)

I.

I've banished Winter, saith the Spring,
Awake ! arise, ye flowers !
Brisk breezes blow,
Bright sunshine glow,
And rouse the young Year's powers.

II.

Rush up, ye larks, into the sky,
Sing high, and wake the flowers ;
Ye clouds, make haste,
The earth needs taste
Your fertilizing showers.

III.

Ye pretty birds, hop on each bush,
And bid its leaves come out.
Jackdaw and rook,
With knowing look,
Now wheel and fly about.

IV.

Pick up the grubs, and build your nests
With so much noise and chatter,
That when you 're heard,
Both beast and bird
Will wonder what 's the matter.

V.

Let hills, and banks, and rocky pools.
Put on their bright array;
Its petals gold,
Let furze unfold,
To hail the joyous day.

VI.

From distant lands, I 've told fresh birds
They must assemble here;
And o'er the sea
They come to me,
To taste the Spring's good cheer.

VII.

I order now that all the world
Be active, up and doing,
To win my favour,
Useful labour
Must come to me a-wooing.

L. Your song has in it the true moral of the season. It is indeed a time to be up and doing. How much more energetic it seems here on this wild coast than in places distant from the sea. The influence of ocean is strongly felt even by inanimate nature, and how different is a calm now to one in June.

It is rather cessation than repose, we feel the activity that has been, and is to come, more than a rest from work.

E. Labour and rest always show their mutual relation ; both differ with the changing seasons, and with the varying periods of life.

L. It is beautiful to trace the connection of times and seasons with those of external nature, and of human life.

E. Is not Spring, boyhood, young manhood, rather than infancy? Does not the year seem to leap at once to the period for profitable energy, overstepping the helplessness of childhood.

L. The birth of the year is more like a spiritual than a physical birth. It is the regeneration of the world.

E. Spring is the natural commencement of the year, just as the first outbursting of emotion is the beginning of human life. That which precedes is only physical and animal existence.

L. Winter should not be considered as only negation and destruction. It is a secret and inward working of powers, which in spring will burst into visible activity. It is like the period of privacy and repose which has often preceded the public career of the leaders of mankind.

E. The expectant earth waits patiently, for the outpouring of celestial influences; so should the soul of man prepare itself to receive those of spiritual being, nor let one Pleiad minister in vain. When once the icy bands of Winter are unloosed, earth and sky seem to rush into active sympathy, flowers and stars hold communion, the eye of heaven beams with ardent and penetrating affection, and makes the world's bosom glow with responsive love.

L. How readily does human love find all nature symbolic and suggestive. The external is ever the image of the internal;

and what thought scarcely touches, the affections possess.

E. How will the world be changed, when it is truly felt how much higher it is to love than to know!

L. Knowledge to be divine must be founded upon affection. Well hath it been said "the Kingdom of Heaven cometh not with observation," for the highest good is to be felt, not seen.

E. Does not Spring summon forth all the energies of impulsive being; is it not a season of intense aspiration and prevailing energy?

L. It is indeed a time of aspiration and hope. A season when our work and its reward are before us; when impulse glows at the bidding of suggestion, and action proceeds rather from feeling than from thought.

E. In human life how sad it is when all spring-time is passed! It seems to me

that in the winter of age, there should still bud and blossom some flowers of spring-time and of youth.

L. Man should suffer nothing good to pass away from his grasp. Addition of years should associate the virtues of infancy and of age, blending together in a moral harmony the serpent and the dove.

E. It is a pure and beautiful sensation, to feel that throughout mortal existence, we are still in the infancy of our being.

L. The physical alone grows old; before the soul is an eternity of spring-time and of youth—youth at whose feet cycles of ages shall pour their treasures of wisdom and of truth—spring whose impulsive energies shall be felt through all the seasons of eternal being.

E. That is a bad melancholy age, in which the feelings of earlier times have become obliterated and dead.

L. We cannot grow truly old, without

remaining truly young. Life should be measured by time wisely employed, and not by periods unprofitably spent. He is the oldest who has thought and felt the deepest and the most. Spiritual age is determined by the acts which make the mornings and evenings of the soul, and not by the motions of the physical globe. The soul should have its own cycles and revolutions, presenting in turn every portion of its existence to the vivifying influence of the great source of light.

E. What efforts should not woman make to preserve in maturity the simplicity of the child! When that is lost, the sunlight of her being is sadly over-clouded, if not wholly gone.

L. It is a common tendency to lose the beauty of childhood. When it is gone, the acquirements of subsequent time are vain, and before true advancement can be made, comes the necessity of being born again.

E. It seems to me while we die daily, we should hourly be born anew.

L. And thus accomplish the high destiny of being young in age, and old in youth. By the union of contrasted and apparently opposing elements advance is made.

E. Are there not characters in the world, which resemble the seasons? Some seem embodiments of spring, others flourish in perennial summer, some show the rich deep tints of autumn, and others only the crabbed harshness of winter.

L. The analogy is true; but while individuality demands one prevailing characteristic, the worthiest are those who unite somewhat of the qualities of all. To be at once individual and universal is the perfection of being.

E. Human lives should be like varied harmonies, each full of melodies, peculiarly their own, and all contributing to the eternal and divine music of unbounded existence.

L. Look at that dark and jagged rock, how brilliantly the young vegetation which is covering its naked sides gleams in the sunlight. Is it not a child rejoicing in a mother's smile?

E. It is most beautiful. The new-born flowers cannot help opening their young eyes to its light and love. So bright, warm, soft, and interpenetrating should be the influence of maternal affection. It makes one's heart sad to think how many women are competent only for the lowest physical duties, to which an infant's birth give rise.

L. In the ideal mother, the physical, the intellectual, and the sympathetic must all unite. Did purer affection and loftier aspiration preside over the birth of fresh human life into the world, a brighter era would arise than genius has yet predicted that the future will unfold. Woman has yet to learn her nature and its powers. Man

has yet to learn what woman is, and to what she is destined. It is rather in capabilities than in existences that humanity must be studied. The man of lofty thought and high feeling will find few women who approach the ideal; but some there are whose influence is truly divine, and when such become mothers, the world, did it know their worth, would render homage, like the Magi to the Virgin and her Child.

E. Before woman can advance, man must love her for the higher, not the lower faculties of her being. The latter suffice and are too much for the gratification of sensuality, and the duties of the housekeeper and the nurse; but the former belong to the wife, the friend, and the mother. Let man go forward, and woman will not stay behind. How seldom does married life afford any scope for the finer feelings of woman's nature! Many a young mind is chilled by biting frost in what should be

the spring-time of its life. How many a fine flower has unfolded its petals, expecting the sunshine and the breeze and been chilled by shadows and crushed by the storm! The purest and noblest creations are often the gentlest, and if on their first development they meet with violence and neglect, they are like spring-blossoms nipped in the bud, and no after sunshine can bid them grow to perfect flowers. When a woman has unhappily linked herself with an unworthy man, the high aspirations and fervid affections in which she hoped to live, are insulted and crushed, the light of her life is gone, existence is a dreary waste; she is like one who once had noble friends and loving kindred, but to whom now remains only the memory of the dead.

L. The picture is unfortunately as true as it is dark. It is bad enough that so many human beings should be born, live, and die, without ever realizing any of the

higher objects for which they are created; but it seems worse to be thus elevated only to be cast down; yet on reflection it is better, if for ever so short a time, and whatever suffering it may entail, to have felt something of the real meaning of life. Religion, art, poetry, and philosophy are all one, an exposition of the true, the beautiful, and the good. Let this great and Holy Trinity be worshiped, let truth be loved, beauty be felt, and goodness understood, and a moral spring-time is at hand. It is by isolating that which Nature joins together that ignorance and vice have so much dominion in the world. Women have fine faculties to feel the beautiful and the true, and can do much to make them powerful influences. Religion is too often a superstition and an external force, it needs to become a Divine impulse acting from within. In raising the tone of thought and feeling, in kindling lofty

aspirations, woman can strongly aid. Let her work for this object in power and in faith, constantly remembering Her whom the adoration of many, the love and veneration of all, have made the ideal of her sex, and enthroned for ever in the heavens and the heart.

CONVERSATION V.

CONVERSATION V.

A journey by night.

Lyulph. Now we leave the town behind and penetrate the thick darkness.

Edith. It is like entering the unknown world.

L. We are surrounded by objects of whose existence we are unconscious. We feel the soul's dependence upon physical organs.

E. But though darkness bounds our vision it cannot restrain the imagination. We can people the black desert with a thousand forms and fill the void of night with the creations of the soul.

L. So, in the beginning, was universal space filled with Divine thought.

E. Do we not feel that more than physical organs are needful to know the realities of existence? The thickest night cannot veil the beauty and mystery of Nature one tenth part so effectually as a low moral state. Divinest forms in vain present themselves to eyes whose mechanism communicates with no recipient soul.

L. Even physically we see with the light within. No undulations of the subtle fluid would suffice, did not the human organism contain the same fluid ever ready to manifest sympathetic vibrations. Much more is this true in the moral and mental worlds—within must be the heavens with sun and stars, which alone are able to shed effectual splendour on the objects that are without.

E. Learning to see is one of the first lessons of infancy, and it is never fully acquired; for, in this life, to step beyond the

cradle is not given, even to the wisest of our race.

L. How differently do we behold the simplest objects of nature! What gradations from the lowest to the highest mode of vision —from the rude clown to the philosopher, the artist, the poet! Even elementary sensation seems infinite in the knowledge it can convey. The highest man, gropes in gloom among regions which, to loftier being, would glow with resplendent light.

E. Light and love seem omnipresent elements, although we often lack the power to discern them.

L. Those who love most know most. To the true worshiper Nature exhibits beauty and sublimity, while to the irreverent is barrenness and vacuity. Two men may live on the same spot, one dwelling in an Eden garden sparkling with fountains, odorous with the loveliest flowers, full of celestial sounds, while the other is in a

desert, the abode of uncleanness and desolation. In proportion as a man develops beauty within, does he find it without.

E. The human soul is as a seed sown in the world. It contains within, the germ of the flower and the leaf, but from without must come the means of nourishment and growth.

L. Now we seem to have left a deep narrow lane and to have emerged into a wide open country. How delicious is the night breeze, bringing with it the feeling of unbounded extent!

E. It is a heath wind; we scent the fragrant herbs.

L. How wisely the wild flowers select their home! I would rather trust the fern, the wild thyme, or the hare-bell, than the forest tree to choose me a dwelling-place.

E. The breeze is rich with perfume. The herbs and flowers hang their odours on the moist air like votive offerings in the temple of the Night.

L. The feeling of adoration seems omnipresent and ever linked with the beautiful. It may be said that they only understand beauty to whom it is a religion and a *morale*.

E. The want of appreciation of the beautiful is one of the worst faults of our age. How few feel it, as it is, a manifestation of the Divine!

L. Night is over many souls, but we are not without promise of the dawn. In the darkness is contained the light ready to become visible. See yonder faint rays probably from a lone farm. Some poor candle sends them forth, like children, into the wide world, sympathy gathers around them kindred light, and they are borne over field and heath, telling man how easy it is to irradiate gloom.

E. I often wonder whether light can manifest itself in other ways. Are our organs necessary for its perception?

L. It would seem that their connection

with sensation, is not one of necessity. Many animals and plants are able to feel the light.*

E. Beautiful as light is now, we cannot suppose ourselves acquainted with a thousandth part of its glory. We must wait until immortal organs lend their aid, before we can behold the full splendour of sun and star.

L. Infinity is everywhere. Those things which to us seem the meanest offer infinite knowledge; and the objects with which we are now in contact, would employ an eternity fully to comprehend. It is wonderful to think that we are even now surrounded by invisible light; invisible to us, because certain vibrations are wanting or not in sufficient intensity for us to see, but to many animals, and, for ought we know, to

* It must be confessed that recent researches throw much doubt upon some instances that have been alleged.

spiritual beings, night has its splendour analogous to, but different from, that of day.

E. How the idea of antagonism vanishes ! Darkness and light are harmoniously blended. They are no opponents, but twin sisters. Darkness as an evil is a transient imperfection of human existence. Promise always penetrates the gloom, and the hours of night continually proclaim, that the daylight is at hand.

L. The feeling of extent, is even more fully given by darkness than by light. In daylight the visible horizon is soon reached: when stars appear, the eye roams through the remoteness of space, and when they are extinguished the imagination is free to traverse unbounded realms.

E. It is as though night set free the soul and taught its independence of physical organization.

L. Now we seem to enter a thick wood,

our lamps show the outlines of gnarled trees, and we hear the rustling of branches growing fainter in the distance.

E. The hour and the spot are fitted for magical rites. Be ours those of prompt fancy, at whose bidding the darkness is peopled with sylvan forms.

L. It is as though we had the influence of a forest scene, its spiritual without its physical presence. The idea, the sensation, is at once indefinite and strong, while the reality is scarcely known. The little the eye can discern, aided by what the senses can discover, makes us believe we are in a thick wood, although such may not be the case. Under such circumstances suggestion takes the place of fact.

E. Now we revel in the regions of imagination, the severe realities of daylight might dispel all the enchanted forms by which we are surrounded, and leave only

some poor common-place scene in their stead.

L. We summon, as it were, the disembodied spirits of a wood before us, and they would flee at the approach of morn. In darkness the mind appreciates rather the abstract idea, than the concrete reality.

E. Darkness is all things to all men. To some it is filled with horrid forms of evil beings; to others it is a simple vacuity, while there are those who people it, at will, with gorgeous and benignant shapes. In broad day some uniformity of sensation is compelled, but when night interrupts physical vision, the mind beholds its own creations in all their individual diversity.

L. So night which out-curtains the physical world, enables the spiritual world to grow more distinct, as a lamp shines brighter when the day-light is hid. Severed awhile from that which is without, the mind turns more strongly to that which is within.

E. Among the servants of wisdom are darkness, silence, and repose.

L. Well do they harmonize with, and by contrast exalt, the virtues of light, speech, and activity. Among shadows do we find the beauty of light, in silence the melody of speech, and to know the value of labour must seek it in repose.

E. You might add that it remains for death to exhibit the glory of life. It was a beautiful superstition that of ever-burning lamps in tombs; to seek for such, imaged well the practice of the Christian who beholds immortality in the grave.

L. By faith we behold eternity in time, light in darkness, life in death: infancy reveals omniscience; weakness, omnipotence; the finite, the infinite; the transient, the eternal.

E. We now emerge from the wood, and seem on high ground. In the valley beneath us are lights indicating a village; beyond which and around us, is the sensa-

tion of an ample view. If you look fixedly at the darkness, it seems to mould itself into form, and hill and river, wood and plain, and scattered villages with towns and steeples present themselves to the mind.

L. Travelling by night, the lights from human habitations excite vivid emotions of pleasure or desolation. To those who have home or friends it is a cheering sight, but to the unhappy, the desolate and the outcast, the gloom is made deeper by contrast with a brightness to which they cannot approach.

E. It is a beautiful sight, full of poetry, to see the bright light of some happy hearth streaming through the curtained window and piercing the darkness with its friendly gleam. The rays seem bound on a mission of love. Whither do they go?

L. To many a human heart, and where none such are present, doubtless they are not in vain, although they are like the star-

light that falls in the wilderness. It was not for man alone that light and darkness were created.

E. How different is the action of day and night upon the soul. In day-time we investigate, but at night believe.

L. In vain man builds an edifice of hard intellectual unbelief in which to dwell; Night will enter it with unquiet terror, while to the mansions of Faith she brings calm repose.

E. To those whose days are well spent, Night showeth knowledge, while Ignorance finds only a deeper gloom.

L. Daylight stimulates us to seek information without, Night bids us find wisdom within.

E. In day time we feel circumscribed and bounded; Nature is external; but at night imagination is able to make all things within, and we seem to learn something of spiritual existence.

L. Were day perpetual, man would depend too much on physical organs, and forget that there were truths which these were unable to reach. Day and night with their influences are both needful in their alternation, and the wisest are they who with the exactitude of the former commingle the indefiniteness of the latter, and carry a little of the precision of day into the vagueness of night. It is most foolish to live in perpetual night where belief is neither founded upon, nor corrected by, investigation; or in perpetual day, where dry intellect is ceaselessly occupied in collecting facts upon which feeling and imagination are allowed to exert no vivifying influence. The human soul should receive from all directions and harmoniously weave together the filaments of truth which float like gossamer threads throughout the universe.

E. You have suggested ideas of the

physical coexistence of day and night. May it not to perfect spirits be at once night and day?

L. Assuredly. Nothing but the incompleteness of our senses prevents us from at once appreciating both.

E. I think in the distance we can just see the lights of the town to which we are going; they make one faint blaze above the horizon.

L. It is as though the lights were an emanation from the mass of life beneath. It was a beautiful superstition, perhaps a true one—that of the luminous nature of the soul. Light with its kindred agencies is the most spiritual of physical existences.

E. From this eminence we see the lights of many towns looking like Magellanic clouds or fragments of the Milky Way.

L. In such dim but united form comes to us the wisdom of the past; time operates like distance in forming Nebulæ of scattered stars.

E. Our town Nebulæ begin to resolve themselves into separate lights, and dark forms of buildings begin to appear, massive towers dimly sever themselves from the surrounding gloom, and faint sounds are heard like murmurs of the distant sea.

L. Of the lights some shine on evil deeds and some on good; of the sounds, some are of strife and hatred, some of beneficence, some of joy, some of grief; but all harmonize in the distance of space: and so in the moral world will all discord be united into harmony in the distance of time.

E. A few minutes and we shall again be among the abodes of men. Although the night is advanced, they are yet up and doing; but in a little while all business will cease. It awakens deep and sublime emotions to walk through a city, when its streets are empty, and its people sleep.

CONVERSATION VI.

CONVERSATION VI.

SCENE.—*A quarry among hills—a distant view of mountains crowned with snow.*

Edith. "The kings of old have shrine and tomb
In many a haughty minster's gloom,"
and here lie sepulchred, embalmed more curiously than Egyptian art contrived, some of our globe's earliest inhabitants.

Lyulph. Man is not the only animal "splendid in ashes, pompous in the grave;" everywhere we find memorials, beautiful and grand, of creatures which preceded us on the earth; every mountain is a sepulchral monument, almost every stone a tomb. From unnumbered ages similar changes have taken

place, similar laws prevailed. Life, with miraculous power, has built up material particles in countless forms of being, which have existed for a season, then passed to the dominion of death, and been taken to pieces by the fingers of decay. So has it been from the beginning, so is it now, and, if we reason by analogy, so will it be for ever.

E. But more than fossil remains of human existence will endure—we are not like the beasts that perish. There must be regions which death cannot reach, lands where immortal flowers blow, where all hope is accomplished, all desire fulfilled, where sympathy links kindred souls in bonds of adamantine union, that defy both change and time.

L. During the life of any animal its particles are in a state of ceaseless change; the organism of to-day is not that of yesterday. When this removal of particles ceases

to take place, according to vital laws, the organism decays; but who shall say that the power which brought them together decays also? All that we know is, that we no longer see the same process conducted; but that does not prove annihilation. All action that we are acquainted with produces reaction, and perhaps if life operates on matter, matter operates on life. This action may, for ought we know, be needful for the development of soul, but the necessity for that precise mode of it which takes place in what we call a living organism is only for a time. Death is only one form of Change, and Change has its relation to Time; it is a relation, not an absolute existence. The opponents of the natural evidence of immortality appeal to the triumphs of death in the lower world; but they know not what those triumphs are, nor to what extent they go. It is mere assumption that nothing remains of animals after what we call

their death. We cannot logically prove that anything does remain, nor can they prove that something does not remain, beyond the physical particles which now go to form some other mode of being. The triumphs over death and time, which are always associated together in human anticipation, will spring from that extension of the faculties which will enable us to see eternal realities with an unbounded view.

E. The existence of animals beyond the grave seems to give a noble perception of the universal plan. I cannot sympathize with those who feel their own dignity injured by sharing immortality with lower creatures, nor can I believe in anything that has been, passing entirely away.

L. Here are fossils of a primæval period, when life seems to have dawned upon the world.

E. Here is a beautiful chain coral, and a curious thing with large eyes.

L. A trilobite, a crustacean animal. The eyes are composed of many lenses, so arranged as to give the creature a most extensive range of vision. We observe a similar structure in existing creatures, so that light and refraction, and the condition of the ocean's water must have been the same then as it is now.

E. Did not these creatures precede the higher race of animals that we have now in the world?

L. All evidence that we have tells us so, but it is negative not positive proof. The gradual unfolding of Nature's plan, the successive peopling of our globe with higher races of being, is a dangerous doctrine. There is *a* truth in it, but it requires great caution to prevent a complete misconception.

E. The notion of improvement in creation as sometimes put forth is most repulsive. In Nature the earliest must have been as perfect as the latest work.

L. All contrary suppositions are as absurd in science, as they are discordant to feeling. The coral of existing seas is no improvement upon that of earliest times, and if among the crustacean animals of the present day we find some superior in organization to the trilobites, we find others that are not. The introduction of a new species superior to those which preceded it, cannot be regarded as an improvement upon them. The so called improved animal fills a different position, now for the first time vacant. In various periods and under different circumstances new groups of animals have appeared, replacing old groups which have passed away. Every creature has or had its appointed place as accurately defined in its own group as any wheel of a watch, or portion of the most cunning mechanism. The group of vertebrate animals is higher than that which seems to have preceded it, but the idea of gradual progress from

a coral through a cephalopod to a fish is most absurd. If we compare the highest cephalopod with the lower kinds of fish, the superiority of the latter is one of family not of individuality, if range of powers and sensation be the test of comparative dignity, and no cephalopod of the present day surpasses those which existed long ages ago.

E. Imagination and poetic feeling can have no sympathy with those views of Nature which reduce creation to the successive and improving efforts of mechanical skill. This glorious world never was a mere workshop, as some would have us suppose. It seems that those who thus strive to make Nature easy, altogether mistook where the difficulty lies. The wonder is, not that man with all his power should have been created, but that any thing should have been created at all, should be at all.

L. The life of an oyster is as miraculous as the life of a philosopher. Once get

life and the power which regulates it, and all else is comparatively easy. Arrive at an adequate and really soul-sufficing cause for the simplest existence, and you have a cause competent for all that the imagination can conceive. The eye of the trilobite we have just been looking at, implies an harmonious relation to causes and powers which operate throughout the stellar universe, and which have existed with unbroken action and undeviating efficacy for myriads of ages.

E. Progress is a thing of time; there can be no progress to Him who lives in an eternal present. It seems as though false theology was at the bottom of much false philosophy.

L. Either theology, or philosophy, based upon unsound principles, produces error in the other. Science has wonders far transcending those of superstition, and they are poor philosophers who try to bring Nature

down to the level of their small capacities instead of striving to exalt those capacities to the height of creation's truth. No savage, worshipping the most preposterous idol, ever believed greater absurdities than a modern sceptic, who makes his small modicum of reason the standard by which to measure the boundless universe.

E. Creation seems a continuous melody, an ever-flowing stream. The dawn must live, even though the daylight is fully come.

L. The great work is still going on. In one sense the Sabbath of repose is now, and has been from the beginning; in another sense it will never be. To the Divine mind the whole cycle of eternity has been ever present, and man traces slowly the shadows of Divine thought, thrown upon the stream of time.

E. How the notion of secondary causes has been perverted. Once elemental spirits

presided over all operations, and genii dwelt in trees, rivers, and flowers; now everything is explained by what we call laws of Nature; once enacted they are supposed to do all, and yet to my mind the up-springing of every blade of grass is a new creation.

L. And rightly so. Secondary causes exist only while a first cause operates, and the term law of Nature conveys a fallacious idea, if understood otherwise than as explaining what experience has led us to believe, the uniform mode of Divine operation. There is no philosophical reason for believing that Creative power operated more directly to produce the first created beings, than it has done ever since to produce their descendants. The idea of delegated authority sometimes resorted to is manifestly erroneous. Who would obey the king's officer as much if the king were dead or he had abdicated his authority?

E. I suppose some would say, if every flower is an act of creation, why not create the flower without the seed; but the seed is wanting as much as the flower; in Nature's plan the idea would not be complete without it. It were as wise to ask why a musician played the whole of a piece of music instead of only the concluding note.

L. Every part is needful,—is itself an idea, and the universe may be regarded as one great association of ideas. How many of them crowd upon us standing as we now do, in one of the old world's tombs, whose inhabitants are brought to light after lying hid for cycles of ages! Where the tool of the quarryman stops, vegetation grows, building on the ruins of an early world; we see mountains—once the bed of some primæval sea, the grave of many rivers—now the cradle of fertilizing streams, which flow from the melting snows that crown their summits. Under how many aspects may this scene be viewed, a

book of science, a poem, a splendid picture, a gallery of antiquities, the sepulchre of an antique world, the birth-place of a new. Intellect has its stimulus to inquire, imagination its promptings to soar higher than the mountain peaks, and the heart is called upon by the myriad-toned voice of Nature, to exult in sympathy with the universal plan, in which Death and Life, Permanence and Change work together for the great objects of existence.

E. As yon mountains are crowned with unsullied snow, so should pure feeling crown the human soul, and be the source of fertilizing streams to the land of thought beneath.

L. The stories which time has written on the crust of our globe, the philosophy of human history, the belief and hope of the human heart, all tend to strengthen the idea of progress; but it is not a process of mechanical improvement, gradually bettering bad

things into good, and calculable by man's arithmetic, but obedient to laws which his highest faculties must fail to explain although they tell him to believe. According to man's idea of improvement, each succeeding age should eclipse its forerunners, not only in social, but individual characteristics; and yet this is far from being the case: among an enslaved and half savage people arose Moses, the Divine legislator for all succeeding time; ages before modern science, came Plato with his Divine philosophy, eternal as the heaven's to which it soared. Praxiteles is still the unsurpassed sculptor; Raphael the consummate painter, and Shakespeare the universal and prevailing poet. We hope for and believe in progress, but we expect not to legislate with more wisdom than Moses, or to ascend to regions higher than Platonic thought. If miracle be that which no law we are acquainted with is competent to explain, one of the greatest miracles is the rise and action

of gifted men. The geologist may tell how mountains arose by the operation of volcanic force; and the meteorologist may tell how they received their crown of everlasting snow; but no science can explain how the world's great leaders arose and received their far more enduring crowns of inspiration and genius. Vain is the effort to trace secondary causation through all the changes of the universe; there is a limit to this mode of investigation, there is a line beyond which is the dictate, thus far but no farther shalt thou go. Secondary causation is the circle of time, primary causation is that of eternity.

E. How wonderful are the laws of thought! With what strange sympathy are persons, separated from each other by space and position, led at once to the same train of feeling! If we earnestly give our souls to any subject, we find others at the same time taking similar views. There must be actions of mind on mind, more subtle than those of

electricity, connecting links unfelt, unseen, which bind human hearts and human souls in the same brotherhood of thought and feeling. It seems that human thought and emotion, unwritten and unspoken, can influence kindred souls. 'Tis not only a dream of superstition that we hold converse with the dead, or with those we love in distant lands; even now, our minds o'erpass the limits of Time and Space. There is reality when imagination takes us into the presence of the great and good, though they may dwell thousands of miles far away across the globe, or have died ages before our own appearance in the world. There are those who seem in mortal life rather spiritual than corporeal beings, who give forth an emanation, an influence, an Amphion music which our souls obey, and build up a stately pleasure home of thought. There are those who drink in at every pore the heavenly dew of inspiration, let it sink into their souls,

and then come gushing up from unknown depths, a fountain of life, giving strength to the pilgrims that journey to an eternal home.

L. How little dominion has Death over these. They serve principles which cannot die, and even in this world their lives are a victory over the powers of decay.

CONVERSATION VII.

CONVERSATION VII.

SCENE.—*Druidical remains on a wide plain.*

Edith. We have contemplated the relics of a primæval world, here are the relics of a primæval faith. We have seen the bones of creatures whose life was in the far-distant past—here we have, as it were, the skeleton of a religion that has been for ages dead. Other memorials of our early ancestors identify them with time, with the finite past, these seem to carry us beyond the bounds of history into the eternity that lies behind. The ivied ruins of mediæval art, the mouldering temples of Egypt, or of Greece, seem to belong to an earlier portion

of our own era. Humanity, with essential characteristics, then as now, is impressed upon them; but these stones tell rather of elemental powers than of mortal hands. If they had been set up but yesterday, they would still seem old,—the very spirit of the past is in them, and makes them more antique than many an elder ruin.

L. It is not the lapse of time so much as the change of thought that makes remote. The earliest ages of authentic history, in one country, seem less ancient than subsequent periods of tradition and legend in other regions. Objects seen in the light of history, are like those viewed on the surface of our globe, we can appreciate their comparative distance from each other as well as from ourselves, while those seen in the light of fable, seem like the stars in the heavens, equally remote from us.

E. Let us stand in the old Druid circle.

L. Now we feel the spiritual power of these wonderful remains. Is it not startling? A few yards from them they were little more than strange old stones; now there is something almost supernatural in their influence, which has come so suddenly upon us.

E. Here, we could believe them the work of more than mortal power; magical incantations, and wizard spells, almost become realities to our senses.

L. We feel that deep and mysterious influence which Nature sheds around human works, when constituted in harmony, with grand and sublime thought. If the soul of the artist is filled with such, physical elements become plastic in his hands, and give it a lasting expression.

E. It is beautiful to feel the harmonious relation between the worlds of matter and of mind; all existence seems obedient and responsive to glowing thought; Nature

suggests truth in a thousand forms, and provides the materials with which it may be eternally expressed. Form, colour, light, shade, and sound, are attendant spirits, ever ready to give perennial utterance to man's sublimest conceptions, and constitute a language as real as that of words.

L. Is it not strange that a religion should die? Its ruins have a deeper significance than those of empire, for, in surveying the past, we care more what nations felt than what they did.

E. Has any religion ever died? Does not the soul of the ancient faith still live and exert its influence on our faith?

L. That is the better view; priesthoods and priestcrafts pass away, but that which gave vitality and power to the earliest, forms part of the latest system: the good remains, the evil is forgotten.

E. Oblivion is annihilation—so does evil pass away.

L. In the physical world all that has been *is*, the virgin light of new-born stars, the ripple of the primæval sea; the first sounds of creation, the first colours and the first forms still are; whatsoever the hand of change has written on this globe or universe still is; so remains all that has been inscribed on the human mind and heart. A positive eternity is for all things, but a virtual eternity for the good alone. It is only when viewed under certain aspects, that the good seems linked with the bad. Seen from the earth, myriads of stars, divided by distances which the imagination utterly fails to grasp, are in contact; seen from an appropriate spot in the heavens, all communication would vanish; so from some point of perfect vision, the connection between good and evil would disappear.*

* This must of course be taken only as an illustration of the truth to be discerned, by looking at this question of good and evil under *one* aspect.

Evil sensations and evil thoughts can be recalled as well as good; but nothing comes of itself or by itself; it must be summoned by some initial thought or sensation, and appears attended with its train. When immortal man has brought his will into perfect harmony with the Divine will, the links which now unite evil with good will be dissolved; no suggestion of the former can arise, and it will become virtually as though it had never been. A musical instrument may have given many discords; they may be recalled, repeated, but never when the instrument is in perfect tune, and responds only to the touch of the consummate artist.

E. If all men were perfectly good, they would do and suffer no evil; and when they become so, they will remember no evil. If immortality brings before us every action and sensation of the past, in more than primæval intensity of impression, happiness

must depend upon our perfect union with Divine goodness. Christ is for this purpose God made accessible to man, that evil may be destroyed and good made all in all.

L. These stones witness how much truth there was in the mythologies of early times. Christianity in the past was not bounded by the eighteen and a half centuries, which we call its era. It illumined the earliest ages; it burned brighter in the soul of Plato than in most minds now; the good and the wise of all ages have been of one faith: the communion of saints is limited neither by country nor race; no people have been without their revelation, their objects of worship, their forms of adoration.

E. That is a noble view of the unity of religion. With the stream of humanity has ever flowed the stream of faith. I seem to see it as a mighty and ever augmenting river; on its banks are altars and temples of a thousand forms; there are all modes

of propitiation, all forms of prayer, savage and uncouth rites, horrid noises, and soul-thrilling hymns; all kinds of feeling, from servile deprecation, which is demon worship, to fervent aspiration, which is Divine worship; the mighty stream flows on leaving us behind, and will flow through times and regions, which will transcend our own, far more than they do the remotest past, until at length both faith and man shall in the ocean of eternity reach their abiding home.

L. There is something strongly symbolical and prophetic in the Druid temples; they suggest the idea of buildings not made with hands; open to the heavens, there is nothing to intercept the smoke of sacrifice, the ascent of prayer; their form depicted the Serpent and the Sun,* wisdom and

* The Serpent and the Sun seem to have been objects of Druidical worship. The circle represented the Sun, and the avenue of stones leading to it often had the form of a Serpent.—*See* DEANE *on Serpent Worship.*

immortality, leading to the great source of light.

E. Such pictures of early religions illustrate the way in which the good that was in them grows brighter as the evil passes away, but you cannot call them true pictures of the past.

L. Mere copy is not the highest kind of truth; let us look at the past as the poet or the artist looks at Nature, with the wish to be true to its highest truth. It is not by accurately surveying its errors that we avoid repeating them, for the safest way to abstain from evil is to cling to good. In arriving at the good of any system we discard the evil, just as in getting at a kernel we throw away the husk. It is by preserving memorials of the good, and allowing the evil to perish, that tradition so often becomes a valuable servant to aspiration and progress.

E. I know not why, but these rude stones remind me of old cathedrals.

L. They exhibit opposite poles of one principle of art. They both bear the impress rather of man's mind than of his hands. In districts which have been the scene of volcanic convulsion are portions of such temples as these often formed by elemental powers, although no Druid ever ministered within them; and in many a beech wood we see the type of the cathedral—there are the slender pillars and the rich tracery, and, when autumn has tinted the leaves, the coloured windows are not wanting. In the simple structure of the Druids there is no mechanism to conceal, while in the elaborate works of Gothic architecture, art is sublimed into Nature; the first has its analogies to moor and mountain, the latter to the forest and the grove; in both man rises above mechanism and seems a delegate of creative power.

E. The broken outlines and varied hue which lichens and shadow give these stones, still further approximate them to the cathedral.

L. In both the indefinite suggests the idea,—the *sensation* rather, of the infinite. That is a poor kind of art, every portion of which is at once equally plain; it is when form blends with form, colour with colour, sound with sound, making an orderly but mysterious maze in which the soul can lose itself, that the emotions of the sublime are best excited.

E. Everything in Nature suggests the infinite. Surely the sensation of the boundless is natural, necessary to man.

L. It is; but the sensation must not be confounded with the conception. The child knows no bounds—nothing has an end; the ideas of vacuity, annihilation, would not enter into its mind. The dead go somewhere and still live; the earth and

sky go on, on, for ever. From this primitive sensation of the infinite, intellect and imagination build up the idea of the eternal. God is—man is—are no difficulties to the child; it is only when intellect tries to understand what the soul feels that doubts arise.

E. Hence so many are afraid of intellectual cultivation.

L. But they are doubtless wrong. Well has it been said that in wonder all philosophy begins, and in astoundment does it end. The wonder is a simple exercise of one faculty, the astoundment is a sensation which the whole soul feels when all its faculties are simultaneously brought to the contemplation of the universe; but until this is effected, instead of astoundment will often come doubt.

E. Whence arises the difference between intellect and faith?

L. No mind can remain in a mood of

faith, until all faculties are harmonized by the habit of acting well together. Faith stimulates inquiry, inquiry ends in conviction or renunciation. No man can believe that which he does not understand, and men must try to understand that which they believe.

E. Is not that a contradiction in terms?

L. Not if belief and understanding are rightly comprehended. Belief is the assent of any faculty, understanding is the perception which any faculty has of the relation which subsists between any idea, and that which it has previously recognised as true. We can believe much which we do not intellectually understand, but nothing that is palpably an intellectual absurdity; otherwise the mind would at once believe and disbelieve the same thing, which is impossible.

E. People often think great truths in-

tellectual absurdities, and therefore reject them. Is not this an evil?

L. Doubtless so far as imperfection is an evil, but the evil is not in the rejection, but in the not understanding. No harm can result from rejecting a truth when it is really believed to be a falsehood by the whole soul, but great mischief arises from stifling the evidence which some faculty would receive in its favour. The human mind at each step of its progress can only take in a certain amount of truth, and if it does take in all that it can, it deserves no blame for rejecting the rest. There can be no truth essential to man's advancement which some faculty could not induce him to believe.

E. Is belief purely involuntary? Have we no controul over what we believe?

L. Each faculty must, by the law of its nature, believe that which comes properly evidenced to it; but the will is not idle. It

can determine under what aspect a truth shall be viewed, whether or not it shall be brought within the cognizance of certain faculties, or, to speak more correctly, in what mood the mind shall contemplate it; but it is not omnipotent even for this. There are many minds that do not seem able to act in all moods, just as there are instruments that cannot perform in all keys. No two men can believe *precisely* alike, because no two receive *precisely* the same evidence, any more than they can both receive the same rays of light; and were the evidence exactly the same, it would be addressed to different minds in different states, and could not possibly produce precisely the same result; but from the fact that all men are made according to one type, there must be agreement on general subjects sufficient for purposes of social combination.

E. Reflecting on belief and opinion, we cannot but think what stories these stones

could tell, what revolutions they have witnessed, what persecutions they have seen. Christianity was once a merciless assailant on the older faith, and often there was a bitter revenge. These stones have survived the fall of the religion to which they are consecrated; they have seen Popery in its splendour, and Protestantism triumphant; and if man will let them alone, they will be a memorial of other times for distant generations, when Popery and Protestantism shall look no bigger than the old Druid faith does now.

L. The seeds of Christianity are only germinating, the harvest is yet to come. There is still Paganism in abundance, in the worship of wealth and station, which is more degrading than that of the gods of Olympus, or those mysterious beings to whose honour these stones were upraised: only a part of ancient idolatry has passed away. We must wait long for the time when men will be

valued entirely for that which is within them, and not at all for factitious advantages which are without; for the time when as much divinity will be seen in the Peasant of Galilee as in the Son sitting on the throne of Heaven.

CONVERSATION VIII.

CONVERSATION VIII.

SCENE.—*A common, with a beech-wood at the back—a large pond, a cottage, several felled trees lying on the grass, and children playing.*

Lyulph. How beautifully the smoke from that red cottage curls among the beech-trees. 'Tis strange that a thing so evanescent as smoke should be the subject of such enduring associations; and yet, after long wandering, when the man revisits some happy early home in a woodland spot, what a magical intensity of feeling is summoned by the sight of the beautiful grey vapour ascending so

peacefully, and mingling with the many-tinted leaves.

Edith. In all kinds of enchantment smoke has ever been an important element.

L. Necromantic art furnishes us with few spells of greater power to summon the spirits of the past than wreaths of village smoke. It is perhaps more powerful than the sound of village bells. How vividly it brings before us early home; forms and faces that have long passed away; the first outbursting of emotional life, the love of kind friends, the first recognition of the beautiful in Nature, which has since grown to a passion—a religion!

E. The impressions which simple natural objects make upon us in early childhood, often strike some deep chord, which makes the key-note of life. A flower; a bright insect; the sparkling brilliancy of the stars on a frosty night; the crescent moon, climbing slowly over the tree tops, or pouring an

interrupted light through forest leaves, the mysterious splendour of the glow-worm on a mossy bank,—such sights in the silence and repose of evening in the country often give the first and deepest hue of poetry to young hearts and minds.

L. And harmonize well with tales of fairies and enchanted castles, which all children love.

E. And grown people, too, at any rate the best of them, if they would tell the truth and feel proud as they ought, and not be ashamed, as they often are, of having preserved a little childhood in maturer years.

L. Most wisely has Nature given to childhood a love of the wonderful and the beautiful; and of all pernicious cants, one of the worst is that, which, under pretence of loving truth, crams the memory and stimulates the intellect, when full play should be given to the fancy and the heart. See, here is a

fairy ring "whereof the ewe not bites;" happy the full-grown man, or woman either, who can people it with dancing elves, and think not of dissertations on fungi. There are folks who will scarce let a mother suckle her baby without acquainting both with the principles of hydraulics.

E. But happily a strong reaction is taking place from all such absurdities. Information can be given at any time, but a fine tone of feeling must commence in very early life, or it will always be wanting.

L. What a pity it is that these children grow up in a scene of so much beauty, with no perception of its existence!

F. It is not all minds that are naturally susceptible of such impressions, but I think all could be led to feel them.

L. Yes, and that would be a most valuable part of education. Here are human hearts in the presence of Nature's objects, but they are severed as effectually from them

as they are from the "spicy gales of Araby the Blest," and few there are who can bring home a freight of holy feeling, and land it in another's breast.

E. Many hearts are so girt with rocks and perilous shoals, that shipwreck is often the lot of those who try to read them.

L. But it is an enchanted coast, and there are thoughts and words of power to dissolve them into air.

E. The beautiful has two epochs in human life; childhood when its seeds are most easily sown, and in after years when its neglected flowers raise their heads under the influence of ardent love.

L. None can love well who are not worshipers of the beautiful.

E. There is nothing that so readily links heart to heart as a glowing sympathy with it. Exceptions are rare that good hearts and true are not deeply touched with its presence.

L. Through what transitions do we pass! The child's delight is feeling; then comes the thirst for knowing; it seems most glorious to unfold the mystic scroll of Nature's laws, to climb the heights of science, and look down on the world with pride, perhaps with a touch of scorn; then knowledge, which seemed a god, appears only a ministering spirit; science, which seemed the temple, is only an approach; then knowing returns to feeling, and when they are completely united the altar is reached.

E. That is man's course, but woman has less thirst for knowing, and her primal want is a spot where her feelings can take root and flourish.

L. In this human pilgrimage towards the good, many stop on the road or diverge into some tempting but treacherous path; few reach the goal.

E. Let us sit on this tree; we can look down the woodland aisles and see the smoke

curling like incense about the leafy roof, and hear the wind rustling through the branches, and the insects hum.

L. We are surrounded by rich treasures of sensuous life; the air is laden with the scent of flowers and herbs, and with that strange and suggestive odour of forest mould.

E. Desdemona loved Othello for the "dangers he had passed;" another source of love is the beautiful that has been felt or seen.

L. And one of equal power. He who has visited strange lands, and returns laden with rare and curious treasures, has need of some home which they may adorn; and this is more true of him who has laid up a rich store of the treasures of fancy or the heart.

E. Happy indeed are they who have loved the beautiful as children, clung to it with devoted will through after life, prized it

as a precious jewel, a talismanic gem, wherewith to open the gates of truth.

L. Life should alternate with sensation and action, thought and deed; they are complementary parts of complete existence, and each one induces the other. It is impossible for either to be well developed alone.

E. It is among rural scenes that the sense of the beautiful is most easily developed; it is there that its first lessons should be received. The simplest elements of physical beauty which can act upon the child, prepare for the appreciation of its more complex combination; but the simplest form of flower or leaf, which first called the young faculties into sympathetic exercise, should do so at last, and with deeper significance.

L. Yes, he who really feels the meaning of the divinest of all forms, that of woman, who truly and deeply loves the noblest beauty of mind and heart, will be able to

turn from them to the simplest manifestations of the beautiful, which won the affections of his childhood, and find them still all that they were in the beginning, and glowing with the superadded lustre that loftiest association reflects upon them.

E. Beauty unites all things, links together flower and star, with chains more certain than those of reason. The poet, the artist, thus finds the clue which guides them in their pilgrimage throughout the world.

L. Nor is the man of science less its debtor; for he who does not habitually feel the poetry of philosophy, is merely a collector of facts, and deserves not the name of philosopher at all. Those who have done most to unfold the hidden properties of things, lay wide and deep the foundations of knowledge, and rear high its superstructure, have had great imaginations, and would have been great poets, if they had not been great philosophers; and let us remember

what treasures of wisdom are the writings of true poets, what deep insights they give us into the realities of the universe.

E. It seems as though poetry and philosophy were twin stars of different but harmonious colours, each shining in the other's light, and shedding a twofold radiance upon their attendant planets.

L. Legends tell of herbs of such virtue, that they enable those who find and know how to use them to see the wonders of fairy-land.

E. They are wise fables, and beautiful as true; every leaf, every flower, is in itself a fairy scene, and calls up a host of magical associations.

L. What a beautiful relation is that of plants and dew! Theirs is the blessing of giving; they give warmth to the air, and, by so doing, receive its liquid gems, and in this the physical world but images the world of mind; for only when the soul freely

radiates light and warmth, does it receive from Heaven the immortal dew of divine approval.

E. Sitting in this pleasant shade, what varieties of impressions come to us at once, from colour, light, shadow, the hum of insects, the song of birds, the rustling of leaves, and odours of the earth and herbs, warm sunshine, tempered by the cool breeze, and all harmonized into one deep exquisite feeling of sensuous life! Such an hour as this lays up a store of materials, from which we can at leisure arouse high and happy thoughts.

L. The capacity for simultaneously enjoying varied and harmonious trains of sensation, is the foundation for afterwards developing harmonious trains of thought. In such does philosophy chiefly consist, for it is that process by which the greatest variety of truth is harmoniously combined. The power of bringing all the faculties of the mind to bear consentaneously upon one object, enables

us to think harmoniously; the trains of ideas or the melodies of each faculty are combined into one prevailing whole. Perhaps none born without a natural aptitude can do this well, but habit of early association helps much. The form which association weaves, the style of pattern which it produces, is determined in early life. Three harmonious strains vibrate throughout the universe—the True, the Beautiful, and the Good; men should learn almost in infancy to hear them all at once; they are also three golden threads, the clue of Nature's labyrinth,—three primal colours of the spectrum, and should be so jointly perceived from the beginning that one always and necessarily suggests the other two.

E. This perfection of association is a prerogative of genius.

L. Science may perceive only one, philosophy recognizes all, and thus enters into its Nirvana, and becomes religion.

E. A religion of which all great hearts are worshipers, all great minds are priests, infinity, eternity, its creed, and all the universe its sacred book.

L. How the human mind and heart crave for the infinite! No flower turns with more natural devotion to the source of light than man to the great CENTRE OF SOULS. All philosophy, all religion, whose prevailing idea is multitude, fail to satisfy the soul, because the true idea of infinity is not to be found in multitude, however harmonious and vast, but only in an all-pervading and comprehensive unity. In mathematics, if there was no first term, there could be no series, and the first term may be said potentially to contain the whole. All Nature is symbolic, all science hieroglyphic, many know the characters by rote, to whom no meaning is revealed; yet no age is without interpreters, no heart incapable of receiving truth.

CONVERSATION IX.

CONVERSATION IX.

SCENE.—*A rocky promontory, with the ruins of an old castle overlooking the Atlantic.*

Edith. See, the mist rolls off the hill and a gleam of bright sunshine kindles a light on the old watch-tower. Once 'twas a beacon to warn vessels from the shoals of the Atlantic, now it stands a beacon on the shoals of time. The lighthouse and the castle are a beautiful combination, beneficence and strength. I cannot look upon those old piles without loving the good that was in the past; I think rather of chivalrous devotion than of feudal tyranny, of banquets

in the hall where barons and vassals feasted together, and the voice of the harper gladdened the heart of the high-born noble and the poor serf, making the roof ring with the praise of valour and love. We ought sometimes to forget the errors of the past or see in them only a watch-tower to warn us from rocks on which many have perished. Time has carried light into the old dungeons, rotted away chains and fetters, perished instruments of war, destroyed all that need tell evil tales of olden days, but left much of poetry, wonder, and romance. Every stone of these old ruins drinks nightly dew to nourish moss, lichen, and ivy; instead of emblazoned banners long ferns hang from the walls, birds build in the crevices, the owl has replaced the baron, and the chattering daw his retainers, while the ocean sings its everlasting minstrel song.

Lyulph. There could not be a finer object for idealization; decay has left all that was

beautiful and exalted its significance, but the time will come when not one stone shall be left, and feudal ages shall be without one physical memorial to tell that they have ever been, but imagination will recreate them for every generation in poem and song. They were true to some forms of human character, some qualities of mind and heart, which will remain so long as man remains and claim in all times some mode of expression that is in harmony with advancing views. No one can rightly idealize the present who knows not how to idealize the past.

E. It seems that we cannot *know* that which we do not idealize, for the ideal is truth concerning the highest and often undeveloped nature of the actual. The ideal child, a being of boundless innocence and love, is not less real than the actual and half conscious and helpless infant.

L. Being is continuous and existence is

essentially one. Ideality sees the future in the present, beholds the oak of a thousand years with lordly trunk and spreading branches in the acorn which has never, perhaps will never germinate at all. Every object has high capacities, great changes to undergo, great duties to perform; the dust we tread upon may one day be a portion of most exalted being. The more we know the true philosophy of the universe, the more we see the beauty and the importance of the smallest part. All this great scheme of things depends for its existence upon a balancing of attractive and repulsive forces;* annihilate one atom, or let it roam beyond its appointed sphere, the equilibrium would be destroyed and the universe would vanish "like the fabric of a vision," and not one particle of matter, or that which would operate like matter, remain behind. The

* Some further reflections on this subject will be found in the succeeding conversation.

splendid passage of the poet is strictly true, an anticipation of future science; the loftiest idealist and the soundest philosophers often go hand in hand and always reach the same goal.

E. Ideality, like faith, can remove mountains. When we are made to feel the ideal of our own nature we are constrained to approach it as well as we may. It is by uniting the real and the ideal, the present and the future, that anything can fully satisfy our souls. When affection clings to some beloved object with all the fervour of devotion, it is not alone that which now is, that fills the heart, but the full consciousness of that which is to come; the glory of the future is made present by ideality, and, while physical senses only perceive part, imagination grasps the whole.

L. Everything that is transient has its enduring counterpart, and ideality joins them together. Were our senses not bounded by

restrictions of time they would perceive one eternal present; we should see at once the seed, the flower, and the fruit. Ideality invests its objects with splendid excellence, but when wisely used with an excellence which one day must be theirs. No faculty has more need of intellect, for without it the qualities and attributes of one thing are ascribed to another. Every human character is susceptible of idealization, but it is often as misapplied as if any one should see a pine forest in the down of a thistle. We cannot know that which *is* before imagination assists our predictions of that which is to come.

E. Love always idealizes, and when strong impulse is misdirected we have the deep wretchedness which must always result from "loving not wisely but too well."

L. There is always one style of character, one mould of mind, which each of us can idealize most completely; with it the defects of the actual and present do not

break down or mar its ideal reflection in our own minds. We feel that we have made no mistake as to whose picture it is; but if we have joined the idea of a philosopher to an actual person with no tendencies which when expanded will lead to philosophy, or the ideal of an impulsive being to one who is only an incarnation of duty, we have committed an error for which we shall most bitterly pay. We have expected grapes of thorns, or permanence from a building on a shifting sand.

E. And expectation thus disappointed is not easily renewed; a building thus destroyed is not easily replaced. The destruction of an ideal image too often includes that of the mirror in which it was reflected.

L. The idealizing action of woman's love is one of the strongest causes of man's highest exertions.

E. And woman knows not the depth of her own nature until she sees it imaged

in man's ideal affection. The highest influence which they exert upon each other is when the objects of idealization strive to make the vision thus revealed a sure prophecy of future advancement.

L. On this spot we have the emblems of the past and the future, the antique ruin and the boundless sea. In idealizing extent we go forward rather than backward. It is with some effort that we think of the ocean's youth, it presents rather the appearance of everlasting prime, suggests ideas of the futurity which in reality IS, but to our senses is to come. Looking down from this giddy height on the rocky coast below, it is as though we beheld the ocean of eternity beating on the shores of time, the past standing, as you have expressed it, a beacon-tower to guide us on our way. Happy are they to whom the past teaches wisdom, and the future hope; whose imagination, borne on the wings of fervid faith, can soar to some

exalted heaven, visit some land of paradise glowing in the sunlight of a golden age, and bring some of its radiant light and fragrant flowers to give splendour and loveliness to their present home. This world, so full of varied beauty, so rich in suggestive forms, should be only like an illuminated book, when, beautiful as may be the shape of the letters, exquisite as the pictured margin, they are but faint and feeble images of the divine thoughts its words express. External Nature should be idealized to the utmost extent, and then it appears but the image of the human soul; for there are cloud-piercing mountains, oceans of deep emotion reflecting the face of heaven, fertilizing rivers of affection with golden sands, rich groves, ample plains of thought, deep mines of love, in which lie buried myriads of priceless gems, seeds of amaranthine flowers and deathless fruits, which may wait ages for their full development, but with the certainty that it

is to come. In the physical world, heaven and earth combine to give beauty to a scene like this, but whatever beauty we can see without, we should realize more within. External objects grow more and more lovely in proportion to the perfection of the light which our own souls can cast upon them, and ever stimulate to higher progress, and not only great works, but still more, great thoughts and deeds, speak with increasing eloquence, shine with increasing light. Whatever was true once, is more true, true to higher and more extended faculties as we advance. The world's teachers remain the same from age to age; the same stars that taught the shepherds of old Chaldea, led the magi to the Cradle at Bethlehem, and still teach their lessons of eternal truth: the accents which fell from the lips of earliest wisdom, still sound in the world; a great thought never grows old, never can die, but exercises from age to age

an unseen, and perhaps unfelt, but growing influence, to raise man to his loftiest condition.

E. The past becomes an ever increasing treasure-house of truth, while the error with which it was mingled gradually passes away. But it is in the mirror of the future that the good of the past is best seen, for then only can we see its ideal picture, upon which generations will gaze with an increasing distinctness until it is realized in FACT, and gives place to a nobler view; for ideality is prophecy, and the poet a seer.

L. And ideal pictures, like prophecies, produce their own fulfilment. All past experience justifies this belief; and men may rest assured that the noblest vision of the most gifted minds will be realized here or hereafter, so that from every vantage ground of new-gained happiness or truth, the ideal future will grow fairer and more perfect, and through all the ages of eternity, ideality

will still be prophecy, and aspiration progress.

E. So that all which is poetical is essentially true.

L. Most assuredly; for poetry regards the things of time in the light of eternity, which alone can make manifest their tendency and truth. The true poet is essentially a believer, for it is impossible to idealize without faith.

E. And as ideality requires high intellect for its full development, so does Faith.

L. We cannot too often remember that the mind is essentially one, its noblest qualities demand the existence and exercise of those which are subordinate. Wouldst thou believe! strive to know; wouldst thou feel the heights and depths of deathless emotion, strive to act with energy, wisely, and well.

CONVERSATION X.

CONVERSATION X.

SCENE.—*A hill top with a wide-spread view.*

Edith. No toil is better repaid than ascending a lofty hill like this. How beautiful it is to walk through "the frost fog grey," that on an autumn morning partly veils these elevated spots, and then see it floating away, and seeming to dissolve into light, and hail the progress of the ascending sun. First to view only a region of unknown mist, then through partial rents to see dim forms of distant things, and at last a splendid scene, with varied objects, brilliant in unclouded sunshine, and overarched by the unspotted sky. It is like witnessing the successive stages of

a new creation. Outward and visible powers do not appear, no finger draws aside the curtain of the mist, self-moved the sun glides noiseless through the sky; we are above the turmoil of the busy valleys below; further from the abodes of men, but in sensation, though not in reality, nearer to those of spiritual beings.

Lyulph. Such scenes and such times make two appeals, one to action, and another to reflection. We feel the bounding energy of mountain breeze, and the calm deep thought, with its affinities to the unfathomable abysses of heaven, as seen clear and free from the vapours which are below.

E. Although mountains are among the grandest facts, when on them we seem in the regions of fancy.

L. Wherein are ever found the sublimest realities.

E. To what a vast extent are our souls

indebted to those gigantic disturbances of the solid globe, by which mountains were upheaved, and all the wildness of picturesque beauty substituted for dead level plains, which, without the contrast of noble objects, would have told so little of those sublime truths, of which every hill is a prophet, every stone a book!

L. Wonderful are the harmonies of nature, each fact, each power is true to so much —is one note of so many melodies, one portion of such varied shapes, one colour of so many pictures. Myriads of ages ago, chemical and other agencies were at work to produce results which now affect the physical comforts, and help to mould the inmost thoughts of men, whose creation so long posterior to theirs, yet makes with them a portion of the everlasting chain of creative thought. Nature with the same hand scatters abroad spiritual and physical gifts. By one operation deep sunken strata have been

elevated, earth's mineral wealth, the countless treasures of mine and quarry, brought within human reach, and regions of such beauty formed, that poet and painter find their most ideal objects on the same ground where labour gives to nations the physical means of conquering the globe. Metal and coal are two of the mightiest instruments placed at man's disposal; and, when associated with moor and mountain appealing to all the nobler feelings of his nature, we may read the great lesson, that the material and the spiritual are not in themselves antagonistic, however opposed may be their appearance from some point of imperfect view. External Nature has done what man must do in his own mind and heart, harmoniously reconcile the two.

E. What majestic poetry is that of science! Well may philosophy have been called divine; heaven-descended, like a life-giving shower, it again ascends to its lofty

birth-place, drawn upwards by the beams of the Great Source of Truth.

L. This solid earth, the hard mountain stone on which we stand, is to a great extent but an air; a slight change in its chemical affinities, and it would be mingled with the atmosphere; again a slight change in the condition of the solid matter that remained, and that too would assume a gaseous form. Many reasons might lead us to suppose that weight or gravitation is an accident, not an essential characteristic of matter; and for ought we know solid ponderable materials may pass into the almost spiritual condition of light, heat, and electricity; nothing but a balancing of powers which the slightest alteration of natural laws would overturn, keeps together the fabric of our globe. The most solid substance, were that balance overturned, would vanish like a dream. A very slight change of the arrangement of elemental particles, would convert wholesome

food into noxious poison, and reverse the properties of substances upon which our happiness and existence depend. We know that the same elements may combine in precisely the same proportions, and yet produce compounds of very varied character. Not a moment, but a change takes place,—old affinities and combinations are disturbed, new ones arise, — modification is incessant, and yet through all the incalculable and inconceivable number and variety of operations, no error occurs; with unimpaired energy, and unerring rectitude, the properties and powers with which the materials of our globe were endowed ages ago, still achieve their wondrous work—a work which is at once a history, a prophecy, a revelation, a religion.

E. It seems as though all faculties united in the ultimate truth which their most perfect exercise can attain; the poet is unconsciously true to the philosophy of the pro-

foundest science; and the most illustrious for wisdom in physical knowledge, rise above and through all petty detail into those grand generalizations in which true poetry is so amply found.

L. We live in an atmosphere of truth and beauty; each one separates and assimilates what he is able. Very similar is the process of the vegetation around us. That distant forest with its ancient oaks, those luxuriant fields with their ripening crops, whence do they derive a large part of their solid matter? It is the air floating around them, which brings in the subtlest and most invisible form, the supply of carbon which the delicate apparatus of organic life is able to seize, and with it upbuild the stately tree or the nutritious grain. Other elements are there too, borne by every wind to plants ready to take their part in the wonderful process by which gaseous matter is condensed and arranged into the materials of

which the human form is made. What more wonderful is there in stories of magical power, than the creation of solid palaces out of thin floating clouds; and yet every moment Nature is condensing the transparent air into the most enduring structures. The decay of animal and vegetable bodies, the outpourings of volcanic vapour are continually adding to the treasures of the atmosphere. The tendency of gases to mix most intimately, the course of rivers, the melting snow, the ebb and flow of tides, the action of electric currents, all help to mingle the varied elements of which the air consists; so that everywhere organic life finds appropriate nutriment, and means of growth; for not only does the air contain substances needful for the development of plants, but its action upon light, heat, and electricity makes it the vehicle by which, not food alone, but the stimulus and power to use it are at once conveyed.

E. And over all it throws the magic of colour and aërial perspective which like a descent of tongues makes inanimate Nature even when most silent so truly eloquent.

L. Such then is a small part of what we owe to the air, such a few of the sublime views of Nature's operations which a slender ray of science enables us to behold. If we carry our minds back to the fabled beginning of human wisdom, science first came from the stars, and it has never failed to bear appropriate minds far beyond and above their sphery chime. Noble beyond conception is its mission in the world! To subdue physical elements, to make the mightiest power of Nature the minister of human will, to teach man what are the great realities of existence, to make all physical nature but a transparent veil through which he can discern the sublime workings of spiritual beings. This is a

part of what it is destined to accomplish, and part of which it is now doing, and in the past has done. It is with such an appreciation of the work before him that a man of science should commence and sustain his career. In so doing he may meet with little honour in an age when coarse and vulgar interests are often esteemed above the noblest truth, but he will have been true to himself and true to that majestic Being whose works he is endeavouring to expound, and a reward will not be wanting surpassing that which all the dwellers in low grovelling desires combined could give.

E. Would that science were always taught in such a spirit. I cannot but believe that to those only who feel their devotion to Nature's truth, are great discoveries allowed.

L. And the history of science proves the correctness of such a view. Those

whose names are a beacon, guiding the pilgrims of truth, ever were such spirits. To many common minds are small discoveries of economical advantage made known, but to those only who realize, if only at intervals, a lofty ideal life are the sublimest views of the universe unveiled.

E Great as have been the advances of physical science in these days, I believe they are nothing to what will take place when a higher tone of feeling prevails. Even the best are contaminated by a bad atmosphere. The most splendent gem cannot put forth its full lustre or exhibit the finest play of colour in a murky air.

L. At times such scenes of ignorance and brutal crime and dull stupidity press upon our view that we could believe most fervently in the degeneration of our race, but even in the darkest gloom are some rays of light emanating from a higher life,

like the phosphorescence which streams from the plants which grow on the roofs and irradiate the dark walls of some foreign mines.

E. Science should not be degraded by its subserving to the production of wealth, for wealth should be the means of achieving important good. Were the use of money known as well as its abuse, what benefits might it not confer!

L. Men purchase that which they can understand. If a pig had the wealth of India, it would only buy a larger trough and more garbage to fill it. There is no text which needs more enforcing than so to live "as to leave it not disputable at last whether thou hast been a man;" but if hundreds of years are needful for the growth of an oak, we must be content to wait hundreds of generations for the development of man. The progress is slow to our finite faculties, but even now, when

imagination exalts their vigour, and enlarges their sphere, the golden age of the future mingles its glories with the realities of the present.

E. We must climb some mountain height in order to see the land in which we live, and in the world of thought the same process is needful. Only by aspiration and ascension do we arrive at truth.

L. And "to climb the ascent of being" what assistance Nature gives! Science with cloud-piercing knowledge, Art with its deification of the beautiful, Love with its firm and unyielding hold on the eternal, all contribute their help; all history, experience, and hope incite to persevere and promise to those true warriors, who fight the fight of faith with courage and devotion, that they shall conquer and inherit a land of thought, surpassing in beauty the loveliest region of the East and inhabit

an abiding city, grander than all the glories fabled of Jerusalem.

E. A country and city of thought; for mind alone is eternal, and thought most real.

CONVERSATION XI.

CONVERSATION XI.

SCENE.—*A winter landscape.*

Lyulph. How bright the sun gleams through the frosty air, sparkles in the long icicles, and glances with rainbow light in the hoar-frost that decks the trees, making them as lustrous as though fairy hands had hung their branches with the radiant treasures of India, or the gems of fairy land. Every leaf of moss glitters with its tiny jewels, and near the waterfall the winter spirits have built small crystal palaces, in which the fern and hound's-tongue dwell. The water stands in glassy columns, its voice is hushed, and no sound breaks the

strange exciting and yet reflective silence, which is so characteristic of the time, when hill and valley lie wrapped in one great mantle of unsullied snow.

Edith. This brilliant silence of winter is most touching, might I not say musical? How different it is from that of a starry night in June, which in mute eloquence proclaims repose! In this is power, an appeal to thought, strangely mingled with one to active energy.

L. Much of ordinary occupation and business is happily stopped for awhile. The season stimulates new faculties to exertion, calls upon man to lead a new life, and do it with his might. No grovelling cares, no mawkish sentimentality do for winter. It is time for strong hearty doing, and strong hearty feeling.

E. Here is Winter's song:

"I am a sprite
Of wondrous might,
And Winter is my name.
Now Autumn is done,
My reign I 've begun,
And I 'll rule till the birth of Spring.

I 've told the snow
To come down below
And robe the world in white ;
I 'll bid rivers stand
As fast as the land,
And I 'll seal up the springs with ice.

With stormy gales
I 'll shatter the sails
And shiver the stoutest ships ;
I 'll rouse up the waves
From their ocean caves,
And the rocks will I deck with foam.

And far and wide
The raging tide
With fragments of wreck I 'll strew.
Through forests I 'll sweep
And the oaks rooted deep
Soon shall fall 'neath the blasts I 'll blow.

But I can laugh,
And sing, and quaff,
As well as I can frown ;
And I love a good fire
And a hearty old sire
With his children round his knee.

A cup of ale,
A merry tale
Of days of olden time,
And Christmas good cheer
To wind up the year
With glad frolic, and fun, and glee."

L. A right seasonable song, with a comfortable ending. We should have no frost on the hearth or in the heart in winter ; and yet how many hearths and hearts are at this chilling season destitute of one spark of fire ! Want, sorrow, and crime, and disappointment keep thousands shivering in desolation.

E. But let us hope, though many must perish in that most wretched state of a wintry soul, that a moral spring-time will

come and make succeeding generations able not only to bear, but to enjoy the winter that closes a well spent and successful year.

L. There is something peculiarly solemn in the comparison which this season suggests, between the course through which external nature has run, and that of man. The soft mantling snow covers up the earth, and gives its blessing as it leaves it to repose. Its work has been accomplished, its duty done, the varied seasons have contributed to pour rich treasures in the plenteous lap of Autumn, and Winter is to their more productive powers, a well-earned Sabbath of repose. The physical soil has been prepared, and the seeds of a harvest sown, which has been reaped and garnered; but what efforts have been made to prepare the mind and heart of man to receive spiritual seed and bear its harvest of love and hope before the last season of a progressive year? If to the poor, Nature has given strong nerves and

firm sinews to do the work of physical cultivation, to the rich have been given the power and the duty of the nobler cultivation of the human soul; and what severe reckoning should this time suggest of duty neglected, and work undone! Charity is one great duty of the rich—the word once was worthy of utterance by lips divine; it meant something higher than the wisdom of angels, something which carried man nearer to the heart of God, than the grandest philosophy, the most universal knowledge. To be charitable was to hold all men dear, to be linked in brotherly love to every member of the human race, to give every energy of mind and heart to diminish evil and diffuse good, to raise the human family from crime and misery to a state of aspiration and progress, to lead the human mind into the sunshine of Almighty love, where it could put forth blossoms whose brightness should never fade, and whose fragrance should fill all the ages of

eternity. This was what charity once meant, and a great deal more; now it has come down to paying poor's rates, and subscribing guineas to eleemosynary institutions. The rich, especially among the middle classes, are too often separated from the poor by a yawning gulf, wide as that which in the parable divides Dives from Lazarus,—and the huge chasm will never close until what too many hold most precious is thrown in and sunk for ever in its unfathomable depths. It needs no infant in the unsullied simplicity of earliest life, no virgin in the peerless innocence and beauty of ripening womanhood, no armed knight full of noble and heroic devotion, but what by many is esteemed higher than all these, higher than Nature, aye, and Nature's Creator himself—the base and sordid passion for gain, the miserable conventionalities, and class distinctions, the unchristian and most contemptible selfishness and pride, upon which the trumpery dignity

of a successful speculator is too often built. Aristocracy has faults enough; and bitterly will it pay for them if they remain unrepented and uncorrected; but the power, the influence of a country is in the middle classes; let them bestir themselves for higher work than that of heaping riches, for a higher worship than that of Mammon; let them forsake a morality of selfishness, and a religion of deprecation; let them practise Christian duty, and aspire to Christian hope, and then a brighter era will arise. It is from the absorption of a people in low vulgar interests, from all honest aspiring individuality being crushed and swamped by vain and false conventionality that nations decay; these vices belong particularly to middle classes, and there is in them more danger than in all the licentiousness of nobles and crimes of kings which have ever helped to bring an empire to the dust. The virtue of our day is prudence, thriftiness,—

good enough in its way but not sufficient—let men be prodigal in goodness, and as thrifty as they like in all the varieties of vice. Our religion was of old preached to the poor, and it certainly has not yet come to be practised by the rich.

E. May they not plead ignorance?

L. Yes, but whose fault is that ignorance? all the means of education are at their disposal, but education itself is perverted to sectarian proselytism, or the purchase of a little learning of the most paying description. The boy learns to calculate interest, but he does not learn to feel the marvellous revelation of divine truth which flows from the paintings of Raphael or the music of Beethoven; he does not learn the sacred language in which the mountains and the waves sing their songs of eternal praise. If science be taught, the memory is crammed with facts more or less valuable in an economical point of view; little of the poetry or

philosophy of science is inculcated, yet that is worth all the rest. Education, as at present conducted, is a failure and a perversion.

E. Among the distant hills before us, standing in clear outline, sharpened by contrast with the surrounding snow, is all that time has left of an old feudal castle. Centuries have elapsed since its halls were gladdened by the yule log's blaze, since its floors were trod by noble or by serf; chivalry has departed, but left an ideal image for men to cherish, and in some sort to realize again. The progress of comfort among the poor has, no doubt been great; but at this season one cannot look at these ruins without wishing that rich and poor would mix together, not as they did within their walls, but with all the improved circumstances which the greater civilization of our own time renders possible. Rich and poor meet together in the house of God, and though unhappily the former are in snug

pews, and the latter on uncomfortable benches, there is, or is supposed to be, one common feeling linking all. Why could not this be extended to art and science? The music of Purcell and Handel thrills the poor man's bosom as strongly, perhaps more strongly, than that of the rich; the scenes of Shakespeare, and the facts of science, demand neither fine clothes nor full pockets for their enjoyment. Surely men might, if they chose, find pleasures in which all could join with profit and delight.

L. The rich provide churches and gin-shops in the town, and churches and beer-shops in the country, and prisons and work-houses in both; the poor man pays to some extent for them all, and they constitute a goodly heritage. I often wonder when the text is quoted, "what will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" whether some ever felt that

they had such a thing to lose. I am afraid many have only been aware of a money-getting faculty, with perhaps a capacity for the toothache.

E. How sad it is that amid such scenery as this, when such varied forms of beauty appeal to the senses, and suggest the noblest thoughts, that the peasantry should be left from generation to generation, untaught to know the tale it tells!

L. The squires, the parsons, the peasants, and the cows change,—perhaps there is the greatest improvement in the latter—they fetch more if the breed is good, and they are better fed; but the advance of the people is miserably slow; the poor do not even seem to have learnt perfectly the great doctrine of gratitude to the rich, which, with subserviency to their betters, has constituted their principal teaching; but, bad as things are, there is some prospect of amendment. The ice which stops the stream of improve-

ment is cracking, if not thawing. If spiritual winter is to stay much longer, at any rate there is some prospect of a little artificial fire to give occasional warmth.

E. If men would, in leisure hours, let their thoughts and feelings have fair play, would suffer the beauty of external nature, the works of genius to act upon their souls, and then truthfully strive to live up to the ideal picture which would come floating in their minds, what vast strides would progress make. Ours is an eminently religious nation; but would men feel that all the doctrines which human ingenuity has extracted from the Bible, all the forms which all manner of priests have invented or practised, are insufficient to save one soul that does not, in spirit and in truth, labour for the welfare of its fellow-men, a change would come more striking than that which will take place, when a mild wind's breath shall melt away all this frost and snow,

and the green earth smile gladly again, to view the uncurtained sun.

L. Do you remember last winter watching from the summit of yonder distant cliff, a ship's career, expecting every moment it would be wrecked—dashed to pieces upon horrid rocks, where no help could come?

E. Most vividly. I shall never forget it; when all but lost, they cast anchor, but still drifted towards the shore; the waves ran to the sky, the highest cliffs were drenched with spray, and foam-balls floated for miles like driven snow; the poor vessel now stood on end, reeled to and fro, seemed engulfed by the tremendous billows, came again to view, but still drifted though slowly to the shore, which no boat could reach; the jagged rocks, when uncovered by the surge, looked like the jaws of some sea-monster, waiting for his prey. They cut down the masts, and then held their ground, but for many hours it was an anxious time,

so many lives depended upon a cable's strength; every moment we expected that it would yield to the appalling fury of the storm; a dark cloud hung on the horizon, behind the ship, in dismal contrast with the white sea foam; more than once, when destruction seemed most imminent, came a broad rainbow on the cloud; it was a promise of hope, a path down which good spirits slid to bid the waves grow still, and at length the storm abated, and the ship was safe.

L. And sometimes on the dark cloud which hangs on the social horizon, come gleams of rainbow light, and they will prove as true messengers of hope as those you remember on that exciting day; good spirits will descend on them, and bid the storms of life grow still. During that storm were many ready to help, some fit to lead in rendering any assistance that might be possible to the imperilled crew; but the rainbow had departed, its last fading hue

had disappeared for many hours, before its promise was fulfilled, but it did not fail. Let no one hesitate to believe that human progress will be overwhelmed by no storm, will suffer shipwreck on no fatal coast: it may be retarded, driven out of its course by hostile blasts; the waves of passion, ignorance, and selfishness may roar around, but they will not destroy it; when danger is most impending, it will find safety by anchoring on eternal truth; a gleam of promise will appear on the murkiest cloud, and sooner or later, calm seas and fair winds will proclaim, in joyous accents, that Hope's prophecy was true.

CONVERSATION XII.

CONVERSATION XII.

SCENE.—*A great city at night.*

Lyulph. Not all the bustling busy energy of day, when thousands hurry through crowded streets intent on gain or pleasure, gives so deep a sense of the power of a great city, as the wizard stillness of night, when the huge mass lies buried in its deepest sleep.

Edith. It has been often said that the most intense solitude may be felt in a crowd; but when inclined to give way to lonesome feeling, I know of no better place than a great town at night.

L. The desolation of heart is most intense under such circumstances. I remember

in this vast city very late at night, walking along a great thoroughfare. The full moon was high up in the clear blue sky, obscuring by her greater splendour the attendant stars. The beams came straight down the street, falling upon the wet road which gleamed like a river in the cold pale light. On either side were the tall dark houses, giving no reflexion, but looking more sombre by contrast with the shining road. Pile after pile of buildings rose in the distance, towers and domes stood out in bold relief against the sky, and all was as noiseless as a city of the dead. I walked on for more than a mile, the houses still dark, the road still shining with its strange unwonted light. There was no life abroad. The city seemed under a magic doom. The moon appeared to have sympathy and converse with the road, but not a gleam of light fell upon the houses. It was as though a more than papal interdict held back her rays, and wrapped the build-

ings in one great pall of gloom. I felt as if the walls would absorb me into their shadowy substance, or that I should be engulfed in the chasm between. The light that fell on the river-like road had not the look of that which falls on the brooks that flow through verdant banks in open fields, but made it seem a treacherous, unearthly stream, whose waters journeyed to an unknown world. I tried to shake off the wild vague horror, and looked up at the brilliant sky; but it reflected no human sympathy, and the same cold and cheerless world was below. The light from the road was light to the outward eye alone, it was darkness to the soul.

E. I wish that I had been with you.

L. There are things which can only be seen alone, and this was one. Your sympathy would have snapped the spell, broken the interdict, and irradiated the gloom.

E. And what did it, as I was not there:

for I suppose so strange an effect did not long continue?

L. If dark spirits prevented for a time the flow of human sympathy, it was a small thing that triumphed over them.

E. What was it? The passage of some vehicle?

L. It was an old woman, seated at a small table by some palings. Before her was a little charcoal fire, and some cups and saucers. The old woman was asleep, or seemed so; but her fire burnt brightly, and human sympathy was present. That woman with her little fire, was a small event, but in it humanity was seen waited upon by one of the grandest elements, akin to the moon and stars whose splendour was above. In the ruddy glow of those embers was the suggestion, the presence of tremendous power; in that old woman was a human soul having friendly dominion over it. The contact of the human heart with the external world

seemed renewed, and through it flowed currents of divinest sympathy, linking in happy union the brightness and the gloom.

E. What a thrilling picture, made of apparently the poorest elements, but almost beyond the painter's art.

L. There is one among us, whose genius long-coming ages will cherish and adore, now too often the scoff of the ignorant, instead of the delight of the wise; he can so depict the meanest object, that it shall richly utter the sublimest truth; he can so paint the humblest spark, as to show more plainly than Promethean legend its celestial birth. This man sees in matter the spiritual idea on which it is based, and makes it clearly manifest to fitting minds; and while such gaze in reverence upon his works, the rude vulgar laugh.

E. But under this dull stupidity and obtuseness are better qualities that must be summoned forth. The lightning sleeps in

the cloud, light reposes in darkness, and they are manifest only under appropriate excitement. If men would but put themselves in sympathy with the eternal and enduring, if they would with heart and soul love the true and the beautiful everywhere, they would arise and greet them. From every side spiritual agencies are ready to come. If man would walk in fervent faith they would surround his steps, throw light and flowers on his path, and sound the sweetest music in his ear. When Christ felt that virtue had gone out of him, it was the woman's faith that enabled it to reach and heal. All around is virtue ready to come to us if we would but let it. We can only give that which others can take; the physical sensation of a hand grasped in devoted friendship is totally different from the common touch when no feeling is present. The most exquisite delights of physical sensation come only when the senses

are in connection with the highest state of mind and heart. Then is colour more lovely, melody more exquisite, perfume more suggestive, and touch establishes a relation through which the electric currents of the soul can more completely flow.

L. When man is in sympathy with his fellow man, how his faculties become sharpened to the perception of all kinds of truth and beauty, which he has the capacity to enjoy. The connection between a wise intellect and a pure heart is one of the most wonderful things in our nature and can never be too often brought to mind. How much is revealed to babes and concealed from those whom the world falsely calls wise because they have stores of undigested knowledge!

E. Whatever keys of knowledge the intellect possesses, one master-key lies buried in the deep recesses of the heart. Many pass whole lives not knowing that it is

there, vainly seeking to undo the golden lock with strange and erroneous means. To cherish right and noble feelings should be the first step of all who would progress in real and enduring wisdom. Mere knowledge of facts such as cram the memory of many has in it nothing that can last, and without a true heart there never was a true intellect. I will tell you a little tale I wrote this morning, it has some bearing upon our subject.

The Fountain in the Wood.

A LITTLE way apart from a great city was a fountain in a wood. The water gushed from a rock and ran in a little crystal stream to a mossy basin below; the wild flowers nodded their heads to catch its tiny spray; tall trees over-arched it, and through the interspaces of their moving leaves the sun-

light came and danced with rainbow feet upon its sparkling surface.

There was a young girl who managed every day to escape a little while from the turmoil of the city, and went like a pilgrim to the fountain in the wood. The water was sparkling, the moss and fern looked very lovely in the gentle moisture which the fountain cast upon them, and the trees waved their branches and rustled their green leaves in happy concert with the summer breeze. The girl loved the beauty of the scene and it grew upon her. Every day the fountain had a fresh tale to tell, and the whispering murmur of the leaves was ever new. By and by she came to know something of the language in which the fountain, the ferns, the mosses, and the trees held converse. She listened very patiently, full of wonder and of love. She heard them often regret that man would not learn their language, that they might tell him the

beautiful things they had to say. At last the maiden ventured to tell them that she knew their tongue, and with what exquisite delight she heard them talk. The fountain flowed faster, more sunbeams danced on its waters, the leaves sang a new song, and the ferns and mosses grew greener before her eyes. They all told her what joy thrilled through them at her words. Human beings had passed them in abundance, they said, and as there was a tradition among the flowers that men once spoke, they hoped one day to hear them do so again. The maiden told them that all men spoke, at which they were astonished, but said that making articulate noises was not speaking, many such they had heard but never till now real human speech ; for that, they said, could come alone from the mind and heart. It was the voice of the body which men usually talked with, and that they did not understand, but only the voice of the soul

which was rare to hear. Then there was great joy through all the wood, and there went forth a report that at length a maiden was found whose soul could speak, and who knew the language of the flowers, and the fountain. And the trees and the stream said one to another, "Even so did our old prophets teach, and now hath it been fulfilled." Then the maiden tried to tell her friends in the city what she heard at the fountain, but could explain very little, for, although they knew her words, they felt not her meaning. And certain young men came and begged her to take them to the wood that they might hear the voices. So she took one after another; but nothing came of it, for to them the fountain and the trees were mute. Many thought the maiden mad and laughed at her belief, but they could not take the sweet voices away from her. Now the maidens wished her to take them also, and she did, but with little better

success. A few thought they heard something, but knew not what, and on their return to the city its bustle obliterated the small remembrance they had carried away. At length a young man begged the maiden to give him a trial, and she did so. They went hand in hand to the fountain and he heard the language, although not so well as the maiden; but she helped him, and found that when both heard the words together they were more beautiful than ever. She let go his hand and much of the beauty was gone: the fountain told them to join hands and lips also, and they did it. Then arose sweeter sounds than they had ever heard, and soft voices encompassed them saying, "From henceforth be united; for the spirit of Truth and Beauty hath made you one."

L. A most godly joining together which no man shall be able to put asunder. Has it ever struck you that about the highest truth there is no disputing? Some may feel it, and others may not, and the latter, with the insolence of ignorance, may coarsely deny it, but there can be no argument. One feels it so, and the other does not, and there is an end of the question. The loftiest truth is never circumscribed by man's intellect; in proportion as his nature is exalted, he feels it, because he is impelled towards it. The deepest truths of religion and philosophy are made known to us by appeals to our sympathies. Reason has its office in human progress, and is entitled to its crown, nevertheless, not by logic, but by exciting man's emotional life to its full action, have the greatest things been done. This doctrine is often controverted by those who have no power to soar for a time above the region of strife and contention, into that of

everlasting calm, and who would rather gain honour and applause by reasoning in some vulgar fashion, than by endeavouring to keep their hearts well tuned, and make their actions coincide in fittest harmony, and yet it is only when this is accomplished that science reveals its truth. No man without it, can understand so simple an event as an apple's fall.

E. I hope and believe the time is fast approaching when mankind will not be satisfied with a mere collection of building materials, which constitutes all the knowledge commonly bestowed in the process we dignify by the name of education, but that they will demand a spiritual architect in the teacher, able to help them to rear the fabric of their souls upon firm foundations, and with spires soaring far above the regions of cloud and storm.

L. It is a neglected chapter of the eternal Gospel, and like others must be preached

to the poor, for the rich are bad hearers when no money is gained by the process. Very much, too, may be done with women in all classes. Even the folly of the most foolish betokens a natural yearning after spiritual things. An enthusiastic preacher of any sect, however absurd its tenets, gains favour with them, because in that misdirected enthusiasm is something higher than Mammon worship.

E. It is said the last enemy to be conquered is death. With him Mammon keeps company, to perish not long before, and when that idol is destroyed, men will immediately become the inheritors and possessors of life. We shall not witness the consummation in our day, but we may have the satisfaction of hastening its approach, and may behold some larger portion than at present of the riches of this world offered at the shrine of a nobler God.

CONVERSATION XIII.

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SCENE.—*Summer time—a rocky lane.*

Edith. Again we are among rocks and hills, again we can walk through lanes whose banks are spangled with blue, red, and yellow flowers, where ferns are waving from the crevices of every stone, where the hedges are thick with honeysuckles and harts-tongue, and where the tall fox-glove rises from mossy banks or stands like a sentinel on the top of the stone walls that separate the fields. We can look again on the deep blue sea and hear the strange talk of the sea-birds to their mates and young, and see the wild rocks gleam with

sea-pinks, shepherd's purse, and other ocean-loving flowers. After dwelling for awhile amid the artificialities of city life, how refreshing it is to be again under the soul-thrilling and pervading influence of Nature and her untamed productions.

Lyulph. Yet even here conventional gentility, with its gross ignorance and its insolent foolery, has its amount of sway.

E. Never mind it—I am listening to a sea-gull, and watching a jackdaw.

L. A much better occupation than giving heed to the follies of man.

E. I did not say so. That is misanthropical; but there are other fellow-creatures beside the human ones that I would now attend to. Hark to the corn-crake making its queer noise. His lady love, I suppose, thinks it most eloquent music.

L. Doubtless, and I am afraid few wiser sounds are made by human lovers to the object of their affection.

E. That is misanthropic again. See, here are wild flowers. Are they not a poem, a philosophy? One, two, three, four, five petals and another with a double five. Here is what Sir Thomas Brown would call some of "the mystical mathematics of Heaven." These flowers bring his stately writings to our memory, and how well their deep melody harmonizes with the sound of the ever-wonderful harmonies of the mighty sea.

L. The relations of number to deep and hidden truth are only one instance of the universal law that all departments of learning, all trains of thought, should tend towards the eternal.

E. What a significance wild flowers have, more than the tamed productions of the garden! They seem Heaven's own messengers sent straight to man to bear glad tidings of universal and undying love. They spring up in form and colour just as they

list, and sometimes seem to emblem what education should allow to us poor mortals. We are either shut out from the beautiful things our world contains, or else they are all explained to us, and we have an authorized version of what a robin red-breast said, or should have said, to a hawthorn bush upon which he hopped. There is either obstruction or too much teaching, explaining all heart and soul out of man's nature and God's mighty and beautiful creation.

L. It is a great thing to be an interpreter of Nature and its divinity. It is easy enough to become acquainted with the words that recognized authorities have taught upon the matter, easy enough to get one human licence or another to teach, but quite a different thing to have the real faculty of interpreting the gift of prophecy. The external facts of physical science are to be gained by industry, and

from ordinary books or teachers; but the spiritual facts which they image, demand the devotion of a life. There was a glimpse of an important idea when the Talmudist said that the commentary was above the text. Every one has his own commentary, and wishes to thrust it upon others. Education is looked at chiefly with reference to this end, and it is not uncommon to find men commencing by a profession that education should be a leading out of natural faculties, and ending with a decision that it should be the means of fixing certain interpretations upon the mind.

E. In all this there is a want of the highest and deepest faith. Men find it easy to have faith in cobwebby systems of human invention, but difficult to believe well in Nature and eternal realities.

L. In this scene as in others, Nature freely places her treasures before all. Here are the wonderful combinations which de-

light the artist, build up the airy framework of the poet's dream, or suggest to the philosopher those trains of thought which conduct him to the perception of pervading law. Here have these things been manifest for ceaseless generations, that may have passed them unheeded by, but they have been, and will be, ever ready waiting for man; so must our means of education be arranged. Our treasures of art and science, our choicest flowers of literature, must be poured forth in the same profusion and in the same spirit of love and faith. The rich talk of educating the poor, but they must first educate themselves. Is it because they know the name of a cucumber in Latin, have seen with mere physical eyes the painting of Raphael, and wear clothes of the newest fashion that they are competent to teach? Is it because they pass their time in a vain show, making trumpery distinctions of rank and

station without regard to wherein consists the true dignity of human nature, that they are competent to teach? Truly our respectable classes need much mending before they can expect the mantle of prophecy to fall upon them.

E. We hear much about the philosophy of this nineteenth century of ours, of its great wants and deep tendencies, but among its greatest needs is a high tone of public feeling. We are absorbed in individualism while we develop no individuality. We look at every question as a matter of expediency, and a chivalrous pursuit of principle, whithersoever it may lead us, is unknown. And yet, how contrary is all this to the free spirit of Nature! If men would listen to the bidding of winds and waves, to the voices of clouds and trees, they would be more nobly impulsive and less calculating and sordid. We want some of the fervent spirit in which brave nations have united

to defend their liberties and put tyrants down, we want some of the chivalry of the crusaders, some of the moral energy of the Reformation in Germany.

L. And we have discontent and efforts for a few physical ameliorations, all calculated at a money value, and yet beneath this surface there are better things in view, and they will one day rise to the top. When the waters are clear we can look down to a mazy depth, and there discern much that is true and beautiful, just as from this coast we can look down through the quiet wave and see the rocks glittering with ocean flowers and bearing many a beauteous shell.

E. It seems in the deep waters of social life, as in those of the sea, we should not be able to get the beautiful things they contained, if it was not that storms threw them on our shores. We can discern much, as you say, when they are clear, but their

greatest treasures are only given up after agitation. The waters must be troubled before they heal.

L. I am afraid our waters are as restless as the ocean, so they should at least be always healing. Human progression is a strange thing, such oscillations backwards and forwards, it is often most difficult to see that any advance is made.

E. We are too exclusive in our theories. We expect the same opinions and circumstances to suffice in all cases, and we see no progress when it takes place in a way different to our wishes or anticipation.

L. We seek to explain all phenomena by one set of causes, while Nature is infinite in resources and ways of working. Let us survey this district. Those granite heights were thrown up by volcanic convulsion—here are strata of what were superincumbent rocks, overturned and distorted by that event; but there are others thrown into positions

widely different from that in which they were first placed, by causes which have no relation to the force of subterranean fires; they have tumbled down, because undermined by the waves; others again have slipped, because small streams have cut them through, taking away their support; while other waters, filtering through the earth, have softened the thin seam of sand and clay on which they rest. Here we have many causes producing the same result, in this single landscape. So it is in the world of mind.

E. I will tell you a day dream I had this morning. Its elements came floating through my brain like the fleecy clouds we have so often watched from this spot and at last collected together into definite shape as we have seen them do.

L. Tell it. Like them we shall find it full of beauty and meaning.

The Isle of Faith.

Once there was a simple people who dwelt in a beauteous land. The vices of civilization were unknown amongst them, and not less the coarseness of savage life. The earth yielded her increase with moderate labour, and the richness of their flocks made the country to flow with milk. It was a small island, ocean-girt, and protected from the fury of its storms by lofty rocks. On all sides, and in every spot, flowers sprung abundantly beneath its genial sky, spangling with their brilliant colours the green meadows and the dark red rocks. The clouds gathered around it in wild fantastic forms, often looking like the strange creatures of an earlier world: but seldom did they intercept for more than a moment the loving glances of the brilliant sun, and when evening

came and they spread their air-built tent on the borders of the ocean and opened their golden curtains to receive him after his descent from the heavens, the moonbeams played on the foaming rocks, flashed on the dank sea-weed, and danced on the gentle ripples of the dark green sea. They penetrated deep into its leafy woods and fell through the chequered branches upon the brooks, in broken streams of silver light. Dark and rich were the shadows which they threw, and when you looked at the clear lake, deep in a dell among the mountains, it seemed as though heaven was repeated upon the bosom of the earth.

The faith of the land was simple, and every evening on the hill tops sweet incense burnt on altars of stone, and the cloudy perfume was wafted for many a mile over the translucent wave. When the almost level sun shone through the crests of the clear billows that rolled upon the shore, the sacrifice

of sweet spices, and fragrant gums was placed upon the altar, and when his broad orb touched the water its flames were kindled.

The people believed that deities dwelt in every part of their happy land; deep in the recesses of the sea, some abode in pearly chambers, canopied with ocean flowers and lulled to rest with the murmur of the waves and the sweet voices of the water nymphs; and it was a terrible thing when these were angered, for then they spoke in whirlwind and storm, and mingled in fearful confusion the waters and the sky.

Others lived in forests, haunting brook and waterfall, loving the song of birds, the bleating of young lambs, and the sonorous bellow of the broad headed oxen, and the gentle kine. Some came sailing on the evening breeze, and swept down the beams of twinkling stars, and throughout the land was no spot found that was not sacred to a spirit or a god. Evil beings they knew

not, for they looked around them and beheld all was very good. Seldom did accidents shorten their days, diseases were unknown, and death came as a gentle visitor to extreme old age, telling of youth renewed among the mansions of the gods. At length it came to pass, that a strange folk came sailing across the ocean, and they brought a new religion which they assured the good islanders was much better than their own. "Cast down your altars," said they, "their fragrance is useless and an abomination to us; worship no longer deities in sun, cloud, and flower in the forest, or the salt sea wave,—in all these there is nothing but dead matter obeying its laws; there is but one God, and he dwells a long way off beyond the remotest star. He made all these things, but is not within them. Once He came down and visited our earth, but now He must be sought as we direct. Believe our creeds, practise our ceremonies,

and after death you will be conveyed by angels to his everlasting habitation."

"We cannot do all this," said the islanders, "for you ask us to receive many strange and improbable things; moreover, we know of a certainty that the immortal gods do dwell in our isle. Have we not been told so by our fathers, and in the night season have not their voices been heard?" Thereupon there arose strife between the strange people and the islanders, and the former sought to prove by fighting that their creeds were true. But after much contention, one arose and said, "Ye are both wrong." To the islanders he said, "hath there not always been a tradition among you that there was a mystical union among the gods? have not many of them various attributes, different persons, and yet are ever worshiped as one god? You err in not seeing plainly that the gods of the ocean, the mountain, the forest and river are only manifestations of One being;

and the strange folk are wrong also in teaching that the true God dwells a long way off remoter than the stars, and denying that he comes in the beams of sun or planet, glows in the rich tints of every flower, and lives in the billows of the purple sea! In all these He dwells, but beyond these and beyond all the universe, for all creation is but a little thing to the great Spirit 'who made and loveth all.' If you would reach the truth you must add your knowledge to that of the strange folk, and then both will gain. Fail not to see Divinity in every ocean wave, in every burst of light, and in every rustling branch; but remember that all these are finite and can neither contain nor measure the Infinite and Eternal. Kindle your sweet sacrifice on your altar at even if you will, but chiefly live the noblest lives of men, and then you will never want a revelation of the Divine, for you will have only to look within."

L. You have pictured an "island of the blest."

E. But the waters were troubled.

L. And they healed. There is a good lesson in the moral of your tale. We must put all the truth together that any have ever learnt. Even the darkest ages have contributed their round to the Jacob's ladder that connects our earth with heaven. Christianity, when rightly understood, presents itself as the synthesis of all that heathen times endeavoured to reach. It is a purification and completion of the wisdom of the past, not an antagonism, as some would teach.

E. Antagonism and division seem ruling spirits of our age. We struggle for union and seek the wells of contentment, and find only the waters of strife; but let us have comfort and remember that when the waters are troubled it is only that they may heal.

CONVERSATION XIV.

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Lyulph. I will tell you a story suggested by the valley of the stream. Let us go to it. Twilight is approaching and the place will help the tale.

Edith. We shall see the daylight lingering in the clear sky above the precipitous sides of the deep ravine, long after evening's shades have fallen on our path, and while you are talking the bats will be playing about us, and the stream will be singing its vesper song. It is a good place for a tale that harmonizes with it, but at this hour it would be difficult to listen to any other.

L. I will not promise a very exact harmony. The impressions previous visits made on my mind enabled me to give certain floating ideas "a local habitation," and yet I shall describe nothing that really resembles it; nevertheless, this scene had much to do with the reflections which gave rise to the story. I will now tell it as told to me by these rocks and hills. It was their evening story and differs in many respects from what they say in broad day-light.

The Sacred Lake.

There was once a land where the priests had no faith: they performed all the ceremonies of religion, told all the old stories of the gods, and received their full share of the good things of the world, as heretofore, but their religion was dead and there was no life in anything they did. And the

people of that land grew discontented and some believed nothing, and walked in divers evil ways, and others believed in herds, flocks, merchandise, and gold, which they gave all their diligence to increase, and they thought only of being wealthy and having dominion over their fellow men. Now it came to pass after a long time that some inhabitants of the land took council together and said, "Behold now we have no religion and no gods, for they whom our fathers worshiped are dead, if indeed they were ever alive at all and not the fancies of a distempered brain. Let us go forth in search of a religion and a God, for never was a state great that did not dedicate its worship to some mighty power able to protect and cherish it." Now while they were deliberating one appeared among them and said; Forty days' journey across the wilderness, and through the dark forests, is a valley among the mountains, very precipitous

are its sides and so lofty that they shut out the light of day; huge rocks are at its entrance, and rough with blocks of broken stone is the path that winds through it. No tree waves its branches across the dark stream that rushes through the midst, and in which the stars flash with inconstant light, nor is any moss upon its banks, neither any sound of bird nor beast, for it is a valley of desolation. The quick waters pass by without any noise, and when they strike against a stone a misty spray is thrown into the air, but no sound is heard, for it is a valley of silence. Seven days' journey up the valley of Desolation and Silence is the source of the mysterious stream, a small lake, girt round with jagged and tremendous rocks, and fed by slender brooks that descend from the eternal snows that crown the summit of the lofty mountain. When the clouds are rent the eye can soar upward through the deep immeasurable blue ether, but far

beyond its ken stands the top of the mountain, and upon it is built the everlasting Throne of Heaven. Whosoever reaches the lake and looks steadfastly in its waters shall behold the image of his God, and the rites and services of religion shall be revealed to him on its shores. If any one would seek the valley of Revelation, let him journey forty days to the east of the city, and then he shall find a raven sitting upon an ash-tree, and she will guide him to its gloomy gates.

Then the people wished to ask questions of their unexpected visitor, but he was gone from among them. And they drew lots who should go forth in search of the valley and its wondrous lake; and it fell upon one of the elders of the city who had made much money, and thought nothing so good as gold.

He journeyed forty days without much adventure, and came to the raven sitting upon the ash; and the raven arose and flew slowly, and he followed her, and at last she perched

on a distant rock at the foot of the mountain, and when he came to the spot, the raven croaked thrice and flew away. Then the elder found himself at the entrance of the valley. He looked back towards the city, and the sun was shining brilliantly and bright clouds were careering through the joyous sky, and on every tree were birds carolling and making their untaught and touching melody. Then he looked before him down the valley, but not far could he see through the thickening gloom, but discerned huge masses of cold grey rock dimly looming through the shade, and saw the foaming billows of the silent stream. His heart almost failed him, but he felt a secret impulse that urged him on. The further he penetrated into the valley, the deeper grew the gloom; and in the dimly flashing water, he beheld, as it were, torn and scattered fragments of pale starlight. He turned his eye upward, and the heavens were almost black

and studded with the stars which moved and changed as he advanced. There was no wind, and not a sound met his ear: even his own footsteps fell silently on the hard and rugged rocks he trod. When he judged by the changing stars that seven days and nights had passed away, there stood before him a great wall of mighty rocks, over which fell in a broad sheet, and casting up much spray, the waters of the silent stream. He sat down on a rock, and looked up at the craggy height from which the river fell, and wondered how he should be able to ascend.

At length he saw rough unhewn steps, and with much toil he got up them, and reached the shores of a small lake girt round with stupendous crags, which rendered further ascent impossible, and gave a wild and fearful aspect to the scene. He looked up, and through a rent in the clouds he saw the mountain towering to the skies, but in vain did he endeavour to behold its summit. The

snow on its lofty sides stood like a pillar of dazzling light amid the dark blue sky, and round it clustered the planets and the stars.

He looked stedfastly into the water of the lake, and a mist seemed to rise from its bosom, which caused him to sink down upon the bank in a deep sleep. As he slept, it seemed that the curtains of the mist drew away and suffered him to behold the surface of the lake, in which he saw reflected a splendid city, in the centre of which was a mart, where all manner of rich produce was bought and sold. In the midst of the mart was a throne of ivory and sandal wood, overlaid with filigree work of gold, and blazing with a thousand gems. On the throne sat an idol whose face was of furbished gold, and whose limbs were clothed in a tissue of rubies and pearls. The eyes flashed like carbuncles, and the mouth was of great size and constantly open. The idol had a crown upon its head, and instead of a sceptre a

large gold key, upon which was inscribed in all the languages of the earth, "This is the key of life, and of the gates of Heaven."

Throughout the city the poor worshiped the rich and served them with fear and trembling. The rich worshiped the idol that was set in the midst, and every morning each one brought the hearts of poor men and cast them into the mouth of the idol; and he who cast in most prospered for that day, and for him the golden key opened the palaces of life and heaven.

The wanderer asked to see these sacred abodes: he was told that no mortal could behold them; but he was conducted to the gates, and they were of pearl, and had emerald locks.

While he was gazing at the beautiful gates, there came a party of the spirits of men who had just died, and they were taken before a judge, who inquired how much money they had made upon earth.

The richest was received with much honour, and for him the idol allowed the golden key to open the gates of Heaven.

Some were conducted to the mart and told to finish there the work of wealth; others who had made nothing on earth, were told their good deeds were of no value, and would not pass current in the land of spirits; and they were given to be slaves to the rich men, who took their hearts and cast them into the idol's mouth.

Then the wanderer awoke and heard voices saying, "Mammon is the true god, and gold is the key of life and heaven." When he returned to the city, he told these things to the elders, and there was much rejoicing among the rich men of the city, and they grew richer every day, and built altars to Mammon, and sacrificed the hearts of the poor.

Nevertheless there was some anxiety to know what the joys of the rich man's heaven

were, and many thought that the old man ought to have contrived to look through the pearly gates. And it came to pass that they determined to send another traveller, who should endeavour were it only to get a peep through a chink; but there was much difficulty in finding one bold enough to go through the valley of Desolation and Silence.

Now in order to determine who should go, they cast lots again, and the lot fell upon a valiant soldier, a captain of the bravest band, who forthwith set out upon his journey. He found the raven, and journeyed up the silent valley, and came to the rocky steps, and ascended to the mysterious lake. He too beheld the mountain towering out of sight in the clear blue sky, and saw its crown of shining stars. Before him rose the mist, and he sank on the shore in a deep sleep. The mist drew aside like the curtains of a tent, and he beheld a mighty warrior seated on a splendid horse. The armour of the warrior

was black, and over the helmet was a regal crown. In his hand he held a mighty sword, which he waved towards all corners of the earth, and it sprinkled the nations with blood. Upon the blade was traced in characters of flame, "The god of battles is omnipotent, and the sword opens the gates of heaven."

Then came officers and troops flushed with victory; and they poured the blood of the vanquished at the warrior's feet, who received them with honour, and for them the sword opened the gates of heaven, which were of iron and brass, but the soldier-pilgrim was not permitted to look through them.

Then he awoke and heard voices saying, "The god of war is omnipotent, and the sword prevails over earth and heaven."

Now when the soldier returned and told his tale, it was heard with murmuring, and the rich men would not believe it. Never-

theless the fighting men received it, and smote many of the rich and took their wealth. Moreover they built altars to the god of war, and every day they poured blood upon them. And there was strife between the worshipers of the two gods.

At length a priest arose and said that he would go and bring back a true account of the religion and worship which ought to prevail in the land. So the priest went and found the raven, and was conducted to the valley and ascended to the lake. He also looked up and saw the mountain with its snow and stars, but the summit was far beyond his ken. Then the mist arose from the lake, and the priest fell asleep. The mist seemed to float over the water of the lake, and gradually assumed the form of a stately temple. In it were windows of the richest colours, and great store of sculpture, and the most entrancing pictures. Solemn

music rolled through the building, and priests in robes of velvet, adorned with lace and gold and gems, performed a stately sacrifice and walked in long procession through the aisles. As they went along they trod on the necks of the prostrate crowd, and they chanted, "High and mighty is the god of priestcraft, terrible to his enemies, and giving to the priests alone, the key of heaven."

And then came crowds of people, and they brought their wealth to the priests, who waved it before the altar, to a terrible idol, surrounded by dark sulphurous clouds, and then enjoyed it themselves. Then the pilgrim priest awoke, and voices said, "Serve the priests, for they alone have the key of heaven." He felt much grieved that he had not been allowed to look into heaven, but went his way home, and prevailed much with the people, and drew away the greater part from the gods of

money, and of war, for he blessed the banners of the soldiers, and the gains of the dealers, whenever they presented him with a share of the spoil, and allowed them to impute the attributes of their own deities to the one he revealed to them. But there were still unquiet spirits in the land, and these were the poor, who had no part in the heaven of the rich man or the warrior, and who could not afford to offer much to the priest, and likewise many learned men, who passed their lives in reading the volume of the stars, contemplating the bowels of the earth, and studying the properties of minerals and herbs, and who felt strong misgivings as to what religion ought to prevail in the land.

At length one of these set out, telling neither the priests, nor the rich men, nor the soldiers, whither he was going, for all of them, in their hearts, hated the philosophers.

Now the philosopher had a little child, and she went with him to the valley of Revelation, which they reached in the same manner as those had done who had gone before them. They looked up towards the summit of the mountain, but far beyond their view it was lost in a blaze of the purest light, which made even the brilliant stars look pale. The mist arose, and they both slept on the bank of the lake.

An angel came to the philosopher and showed him the foundations of the world, and led him from star to star, explaining the mysteries of every constellation. The angel showed him no idol, but made him feel the spirit of the universe, and told him that "Wisdom and knowledge are the keys of heaven."

An angel came also to the child, and she felt a warmer love glowing upon her than she had ever known before, every angry pas-

sion seemed to melt away, and the happiest and kindest forms gathered around, and the child awoke, hearing voices singing, "The pure and simple of heart shall enter the gates of Heaven."

When both awoke, each told the vision of his dream, and the philosopher pondered the matter well in his heart, and behold, as they journeyed home, the valley was full of life, and glad sounds arose from it. At the entrance was a beautiful shape, who thus addressed them, "Marvel not at the result of your visit to the Sacred Lake, or at the tales of those who have gone before you, few can see more in its mysterious waters than the reflexions of their own hearts; knowledge and wisdom are indeed keys of heaven, but to these must be added faith and love. The heaven of the rich man, of the warrior, of the priest, and of the philosopher vary in value, and in the depth of their disappointment, but when wisdom and knowledge

are joined to faith and love, be it in the bosom of rich or poor, priest or philosopher, to him shall the true and eternal Heaven be opened by the Lord of Life."

CONVERSATION XV.

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SCENE.—*A large and lofty hall, dimly lighted by two candles on a table in the centre.*

Edith. This is a fine place for thought; we can summon here in this misty twilight all scenes through which we have passed. The dark oak panelling grows unsubstantial in the distance, we feel we are not caged in with hard materialism, but that our souls are free, and the elements obey them.

Lyulph. And yet it is a different freedom from what we feel on mountain or moor.

E. Less of action and more of reflexion.

L. How delightful it is to let imagination bring floating in this pleasant gloom

its airy pictures of the things we have seen, with bodily vision or the spirit's eye, blending the beauty of many lands, towers and palaces, spires and domes, green waving forests, rivers glowing in sunset light, lone grey moors veiled in morning's mist, mountain peaks faintly reddening with the first promise of day, the mighty ocean in dreamy slumber basking in the warm glow of summer noon or flouting its vexed waves in the murky sky, when its face is torn by the lightning of the winter storm.

E. They come and go as you describe them, but what do they leave behind ?

L. Faith.

E. That is indeed the end of wisdom, the great lesson of the universe.

L. Nature will not allow man to intellectualize himself into infidelity. Every grand prospect, every burst of melody carries conviction to the heart that truth is eternal,

man immortal, destined for infinite ages to grow nearer to the life divine.

E. Surely the heart is a higher judge of truth than the reason. We believe, more because we feel than because we think.

L. They greatly err who think the logical is the only form of proof. Every faculty of the human mind—and who shall limit their number?—is capable of weighing evidence and receiving proof. Let the keenest intellect soar to its sublimest heights and when it has found some great truth among the loftiest alps of reason, if it sinks deeply into the heart of the discoverer he will be able to bring it home to the hearts of others, not as a discovery of science but as a verity of Faith.

E. It is a good thing to say I think, better to say I know, but best, I believe.

L. Men always believe who come freely into contact with Nature. It is the brick and mortar life of trade and towns that so

often doubts: but this will not always be. It is among cities that intellect and science thrive, and they should and will lead to faith. Man should never rest content with *knowing*, he should also feel. When truth is only mastered by the intellect, it is still external—no part of the ME: to become so it must be felt and loved.

E. We often hear of ignorance as the mother of faith, but it surely cannot be true.

L. Far from it—ignorance, knowing little, cannot believe much; but we must not forget that many know much, who could not cast it into a logical mould.

E. That is the condition of woman's knowledge.

L. And of man's highest wisdom.

E. How many have believed and loved before they have understood?

L. It is happy that man can do so, or else he would be destitute of the sublimest truth.

E. But though you exalt man's sympathetic belief, you would not undervalue his intellect.

L. By no means, for it is a god-like thing, but it shines brightest when the heart is pure. Truth is many-sided, and man should be myriad-minded, never content with bringing one faculty to bear on one side.

E. How Nature's teaching is like that of genius. It is grand, soul-convincing affirmation, inspiration rather than reason.

L. It is proof to man's highest faculties. IT IS, I AM, are above reason,—syllogism cannot touch them. Away with the absurdity of,—I think, therefore I am ; I AM is its own proof, or rather precedes all proof, and to it any one may append, if he pleases, therefore I think.

E. Such ideas could not have occurred to a woman. Women believe, while men try to know.

L. A just distinction, hence it is not good for either to be alone. Thought is the outpost,—feeling, the centre and citadel of our being.

E. To be gained not by logic, but by love.

L. The grandest alchemy is to transmute knowledge into love,—*thinking* into *being*.

E. The sublimest arguments are addressed to our *being*, not to our *thinking*. In this way is our own immortality made known to us, it comes as naturally to the soul as dew-drops to the leaf, if it does not rather spring from it as the flower from the stem.

L. Perhaps both illustrations are true, for it is not in one way only that a great truth is known. See how the moonlight comes many-tinted through the stained window; he would have a sorry and disjointed perception who could see only a single colour.

E. There is something very beautiful and wondrous in this bringing the colours down from the window, and tinting both walls and floor. It is like shadows of heaven falling upon earth, and penetrating our inner homes.

L. In sun-light they would fall strong, sharp, and clear, showing an affinity with acting and knowing, while the moon makes them fall upon us, like pale soft dreams whose affinities are with feeling and being.

E. The moon's reflected light sinks deeper into the heart than the original splendour of the sun.

L. So does the light of Nature penetrate deepest into humanity when reflected by genius. The full sun makes all things strongly *objective*, they are to be known *without*, the moon does not show the hard realities of matter, but makes the world like the fabric of a dream, which the physical senses can scarcely touch, while

the soul can deeply feel. In nature the light of the sun is converted by reflection into the light of the moon, so in man should the light of science be changed into the light of love. The sunlight strongly exhibits individualities and differences, the moonlight reveals the outlines of masses rather than those of separate objects, so science leads to particulars while the grandest generalizations are embraced by love.

E. That is most true, for genius ever exhibits heartfelt sympathies and its professors feel truth while the mere men of science are groping in search of it.

L. Look at the shadows on the wall. Those vine-leaves are so clearly defined that we cannot mistake them, others are just distinct enough for us to guess what object causes them, while some defy conjecture.

E. Shadows are so beautiful that I do

not wonder at their being sometimes preferred to realities.

L. Many deserve it, for surely the shadow of good is better than the reality of evil.

E. Shadow not only leads to thought, but seems to have some mystical affinity *with* thought.

L. Our opinions are shadows of truth, and when the mirror of our mind is clear and rightly placed with relation to the object it reflects, we become acquainted with its real forms; but very often the mental shadow is as unintelligible as some that the moon now throws.

E. The shadow must be a correct picture although we cannot comprehend it.

L. So we may see correctly, when we view a figure with such fore-shortening that we cannot tell what it is. Properly to appreciate any object, we must stand in a right position, and this is as true in the world

of thought as it is in the world of matter, and yet how constantly do men content themselves with looking from the ground of reason at things which can only be rightly seen from the ground of faith.

E. Flattering themselves that reason looks at realities, while faith is occupied with shadows.

L. Well is it for man that truths, themselves invisible, send forth their shadows. Earth is the shadow of Heaven, Time of Eternity, and the soul receives its grandest illumination from the shadows of Eternal Being.

E. Ourselves are shadows, though divine.

L. There can be but one independent reality, all else is shadow, but not less real.

E. Strange that truth should be at once shadow and light; the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, and a bright lamp in the crypts of error.

L. Light and darkness are opposite poles of one existence. Twofold is the function of the world's teachers,—they bring at once light and shadow, as the sun at once sheds splendour on the flowering earth, and causes the shadow of the cloud to fall upon the tender leaf.

E. Many rejoice in shadows who could not endure the objects which cause them.

L. True, and many can see shadows, who could never behold the antecedent forms. Many to whom Nature reveals nothing, can worship her shadow in the productions of genius. The business of the philosopher, the poet, or the artist, is to visit regions beyond the reach of ordinary men, and by faithful shadows to make them known, even as the traveller in distant lands, assisted by photographic art, brings home the shadow pictures of the lands he has seen.

E. Why does a scene exert no power

on minds which are enkindled by its image, in the painting and the poem?

L. The light of the sun makes visible, the light of the soul makes beautiful. The poet and the painter project their shadows of Nature, by the light of their own souls, upon the minds of other men. Mankind are like dwellers in a cavern, and only when some Promethean spirit kindles a heavenly flame, do they behold the sparry gems that fret its roof. The precious crystals, in which spiritual things are to be discerned, the magic mirrors which reflect forms unseen by common eyes, have their existence in the mind of genius, and there only must be sought and found. There are true consents between planets and elements, between stars and flowers; the golden threads of analogy unite all, weave all into one great web of universal being; to perceive somewhat of whose embroidered pattern all faculties are needful;

some portion of the design floats more or less distinctly in the imagination of gifted minds, and forms the shadowy type according to which reason and experiment build the edifice of science. The loftier the tone of mind and the more harmoniously its powers work, the more knowledge becomes an intuition, an inspiration, the less is it dependent upon experiment or logic, which are not so much for discovery as for verification of truth.

E. Must not experiment always teach truth?

L. It teaches fact, and facts are true; but their value, meaning, and position in the universe it does not teach, and these belong to the higher phases of truth, or to that which pre-eminently is *the* truth concerning them.

E. Much as we may love the pictures of imagination, must we not confess that we behold them in a misty light?

L. They must be very short-sighted who see no farther than they can see clearly. Crude random fancies deserve not the name of imagination, and whether or not there be one faculty or organ peculiarly its own, the highest, the only true imagination, is not when one portion of the soul is exercised alone, but when all faculties work together in that mood, and fancy is the key-note of some great harmony of mind.

E. It seems like an orchestral music, in which each instrument brings its melody, and the idea of the composer is developed by the harmony of the whole.

The End.

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